Questions of youth, identity and social difference in the classroom study of popular music: a case study in the development of media education

by

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Abstract

This thesis is centrally concerned with just one specific practice, teaching Media Studies with school students in the 14-18 age phase, and with one marginal feature of that practice, the study of popular music. The thesis explores the place of popular music in Media Studies and, in doing so, engages with issues of social and educational identity for people in the last years of secondary schooling. The introduction initiates an autobiographical theme, subsequently informing discussion of the negotiation of identities between the researcher and the school students.

Chapter 1 provides an account of popular music in the literature of media education and in the parallel literature of music education. Chapter 2 reviews aspects of debates around 'adolescence' and 'youth', with reference to questions of 'agency', and thus provides a *background* for the analysis of data presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Chapter 3 offers an overview of methodology and sets out a chronology of the research with particular emphasis upon its progressive focusing. The methodological precedents for the thesis lie in action research and in the development of 'reflective practice' in teacher education, and particularly within English and media education itself.

Chapters 4 and 5 report upon a taught unit relating to popular music, conducted in collaboration with a Head of English. Within the frame of the institutional relation between teacher and taught, issues of class and gender are given particular attention in the analysis of the data. Chapter 6 reports a more 'experimental' intervention in Media Studies practice. The chapter derives from a further phase of research with first year A Level Media Studies students in a selective school and extends the earlier discussion of gender and class in relation to modes of (self) representation within particular educational settings.

Chapter 7 reviews the research and considers future possibilities for teaching pop music in secondary school Media Studies.

CONTENTS

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Several chapters, originally written as conference papers, have also been published, if often in another form. Edited extracts from Chapter 1 have been published in *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* Vol.16 No.3. Appendix 1 was presented to the first Domains of Literacy Conference, at the Institute of Education, September 1992. Chapter 4 was presented to the Media, Culture and Curriculum Special Interest Group at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, Georgia, April 1993; it was subsequently published as 'The English Curriculum - What's music got to do with it?' in *Changing English* Vol.1 No.2. Chapter 5 was presented to the second Domains of Literacy Conference, September 1994. An earlier draft of Chapter 6 was presented to the Media, Culture and Curriculum Special Interest Group at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in San Francisco, April 1995. A version of Chapter 7 was presented to the Symposium on 'Post-Conservative Programmes of Reform', at the European Conference on Educational Research at the University of Bath, September 1995. It has been published as a chapter in David Buckingham (ed.), *Teaching Popular Culture: Beyond Radical Pedagogy* (UCL Press, 1997). Part II of the introduction ('Putting Cultural Studies in Its Place?') was included in a presentation to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, in New Orleans, April 1994 - and subsequently published in *Cultural Studies - A Research Volume*, edited by Norman K. Denzin (JAI Press, 1996).

A slightly different version of the complete thesis has been published as *Teen Spirits: Music and Identity in Media Education* (UCL Press, 1998)

Foreword

This is a thesis about teaching popular music within the constraints of formal courses in Media Studies. Media Studies in schools has attempted to engage with the informal cultural experience of young people and has aspired to provide the means to explore and to reflect upon such experience. But it has done so from within the constraints of the formal school curriculum and with an often uncomfortable mix of censure and celebration of popular cultural forms. In this context, pop music stands out as an especially awkward case and, for that reason among others, I have made its place in Media Studies my main concern. In the main empirical chapters of this thesis, I examine data derived from, and peculiar to, institutional exchanges between teacher and taught in the conduct of GCSE and A Level Media Studies courses. These are *institutional* encounters and are of interest as particular instances of the negotiation of identities between students and between students and teachers. In Media Studies lessons informal knowledge and experience of popular culture is rearticulated through the formal practices of school: in, for example, 'discussions', 'evaluations' and 'assignments'. Thus, though arguing for the place of popular music within Media Studies, the thesis explores the difficulties, the disjunctions and failures, as well as the possibilities, faced by teachers in this field.

The main precedent for this research, and an initiative in which I was myself involved, lies in the work of the Media Teachers' Research Group at the Institute of Education, active through 1987-1990, and culminating in the publication of *Watching Media Learning: Making Sense of Media Education* (Buckingham, 1990). Other studies have followed *Watching Media Learning*, notably *Cultural Studies Goes to School* (Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 19994) and *Making Media: Practical Production in Media Education* (Buckingham, Grahame, and Sefton-Green 1995). This thesis, in common with these precedents, presents arguments which are located within, and return to address, this very particular social practice - teaching Media Studies. Its distinctive contribution to this field lies in its more sustained discussion of attempts to engage with pop music and in its development of a 'reflective practice' perspective to include autobiographical notes on my self-formation as a Media Studies teacher.

The introduction to this thesis begins with another kind of precedent for the research that I have done. Simon Frith's book *Sound Effects* (1983), and much of Frith's other writing on popular music (see Frith, 1996), has been widely influential in Cultural Studies and beyond. Nevertheless, it seems that an example of school based research included in

both *Sound Effects* and the earlier *The Sociology of Rock* (1978), has been neglected, remembered only, perhaps, as a footnote to the wider argument about youth and the music industry. I have recovered Frith's school based research because it provides an 'early' example of an enquiry into school students' informal knowledge of popular music. However, it also provides a marked contrast to my own enquiry because what I present in the main empirical chapters of the thesis is not a sociology of the students' lives but an account of the forms in which they represent their experience of popular music in Media Studies lessons. I chose to do research in classrooms because, rather than attempt to investigate a youth culture 'out there', as constructed in the 'subcultural' literature, I wanted to make questions of teaching, and of the negotiation of identities between teacher and taught, central. In Media Studies lessons, popular cultural knowledge, the social relations of the classroom, and the forms of representation required by teachers intersect. This is my focus.

It may help readers of this thesis to think of it as weaving together three main themes; these themes extend across the more obvious textual divisions of 'literature review', 'methodology' and 'presentation of data and analysis'. The first theme is that of the neglect of pop

music in media education and of the problems to be faced in developing teaching which does engage with this aspect of informal knowledge. The second is that of my own formation as a teacher. I write as one of a generation of teachers whose entry into English and Media teaching dates back to the mid 1970s. In the introduction, for example, I emphasise a disjunction between much of what has constituted academic Cultural Studies and the work that English and Media teachers do in schools, delineating my own route into teaching English (and thus Media Studies) in secondary schools. This is also a methodological issue for, as I argue, having been a Media Studies teacher shaped and focused my actions as a researcher throughout. I started, for example, by talking to students in a classroom, in a Media Studies lesson, not in a corridor or out in the 'play-ground' during break. The third theme involves a contrast between class 'investments' in formal education. This is, of course, long familiar in the sociology of British education but here I consider its implications in terms of the local and particular instances of practice from which I have derived my primary data.

The first of my three themes is introduced most fully in Chapter 1. Despite some early interest, popular music has been relatively neglected through many years of innovation in Media Studies teaching. I argue that it should be recognized

as thoroughly a part of 'media culture' and the concerns of media education. However, I also argue that this neglect is far from easily overcome and, through Chapters 4-6, I discuss the problems I encountered in my own attempts to try out 'teaching about popular music' with GCSE and A Level students. Future practice in Media Studies teaching, beyond the past neglect of popular music, is considered in Chapter 6 and extended into Chapter 7.

Teaching about pop music has almost always been reported as a somewhat risky and troublesome thing to do. Attempting to research the teaching practices through which students' knowledge of such music might be engaged was also, necessarily, a complex and difficult matter. In conducting my research, I did not avoid these difficulties but, to the contrary, explored them by acting, once again, as a teacher. As I progressively focused[1] my research, I realized that other research tactics, distinct from that of involvement with the students as a teacher, or as a close associate of their regular Media Studies teacher, would not have enabled me to explore the practice central to my concerns. In teaching Media Studies, there is often some uncertainty about what it is that constitutes the knowledge that is being taught and thus, for the students what it is that is being learnt (see Buckingham, 1990). Moreover, teaching Media

Studies can often involve violating boundaries between formal and informal domains of knowledge, with consequences which may be unsettling, often for both teacher and taught (see Richards, 1986). In reading through Chapters 4-6, it is important to bear in mind that their sequence represents this kind of tentative, sometimes frustrated, and often uncomfortable process. The three chapters thus represent a narrative of my own 'progress' through the research: from one limited, and sometimes unsatisfactory, teaching initiative to the next. If this uncertainty is familiar in the wider context of Media Studies teaching, it is perhaps amplified here because, in doing a Ph.D, I was also, in part, *learning* to do research. Some of my tactics faltered but were crucial to the process of progressively focusing the thesis (see Appendices 1 and 2). Of course, sometimes what I learnt suggested that a different approach might have been more productive but I could not have known that without encountering the awkwardness and inadequacies of doing the research in the first place.

The second main theme connects this experience of 'progressive focusing', and the negotiations of identity it entailed, with a wider series of autobiographical reflections[2] ranging across three interconnected 'identities': myself as adolescent, as teacher and as

researcher. These autobiographical elements were given some particular impetus by the coincidence of the first year of my research (1992-93) with the last of almost six years 'in analysis' at the (London) Institute of Psycho-Analysis (1987-93). As, at least in part, a particular social practice of remembering, psychoanalysis informed my sense of 'myself' in this research. Some traces of the habit of (self)analysis thus informed the various reflections upon my self-as-researcher evident in this thesis. In this respect, I follow the argument that the 'subjectivity' of the researcher is a constitutive feature of the research itself (see Walkerdine, 1986 and 1997; Ball, 1993; Hollway, 1994; Kvale, 1996). However, for me, the experience of psychoanalysis also amplified the sense of fragmentation, discontinuity and instability in knowing others which, as a teacher, was evident in my institutionally constituted relations with students. Put another way, I could say that if 'knowing myself' was such a complex and elusive matter, then knowing others, especially from the standpoint of a teacher, appeared that much more confined to the peculiar and particular institutional circumstances of our exchanges. Thus, despite their attractions, I have not aspired to offer psychoanalytic explanations of data produced within the practice of teaching, rather than in the practice of psychoanalysis. I do not regard the data that I collected as a sufficient basis

for a psychoanalytically informed study, or as a basis for making wide-ranging claims about 'youth' identities. The focus is upon the limits and difficulties, and also the possibilities, of institutional encounters between teacher and taught.

In Chapter 3, I provide an overview of my research, setting out just what I did and why. My data arose out of experiments with teaching about pop music in two schools. The schools provided contrasting levels of development in Media Studies. One, a comprehensive school in Hackney (with no 'Sixth Form'), taught Media Studies to GCSE level with meagre resources and as an optional, and not prestigious, subject in the English Department. This resembled the context of my own experience of teaching Media Studies in the neighbouring borough of Islington. The second school, in Edmonton, with a highly selective intake and a strong academic reputation, taught both GCSE and A Level Media Studies and had achieved both spectacular results and rapidly expanding popularity for the subject. Working across these two sites, I present studies of groups and of individual students, and draw upon the perspectives of teachers, involved with attempts to bring pop music into the curriculum. These studies are not strictly parallel. I bring together elements of teacher action

research, interviews with 'adolescents' in a classroom setting, and discussion with teachers, in the spirit of collaborative reflective practice. The research is therefore quite eclectic, more of a hybrid than a pure example of just one approach. In effect, I collect various examples of attempts to put popular music into the school curriculum in order to tell a story about how complicated, and how interesting, making the effort to do this can be.

As a man aging from 40 to 43, during the period of the research, and seeking to engage students of 15, 16 and 17 in discussions of popular music, I could hardly pretend to be 'hanging out', on terms of familiarity and intimacy, as 'one of them'. If age was one feature of my identity for them, as an adult in a school setting, I was also 'placed' by students in terms of the various categories of adult identity appropriate to the context. I was, additionally, someone who asked the kinds of questions that teachers might ask and was, in some broad sense, in alliance with their Head of English, or of Media Studies. For them, I seemed thus to be a kind of (mature) student teacher or, sometimes, a lecturer 'from the Institute'. Given my visible identity, I explained my interest in popular music - an often peculiarly 'personalised' domain of cultural experience, highly specific

to youth and adolescence - as, precisely, *a matter of my professional interest in media education*. This was not a 'front' adopted in order to gather data about youth cultures. Whatever fantasies of being an 'ethnographer' that I may have had, I realized quite early in the research that this - being a kind of teacher - was going to be the only basis on which I should expect to engage in a dialogue with the students I was able to meet and, subsequently, to teach.

My third theme involves a broad contrast between working class and middle class 'investments' in education (cf. Willis, 1977) and the various ways in which students located in different class cultures represent their 'knowledge', 'interests' and 'tastes' in popular music in the school context. Though they shared their location in the liminal phase of 'adolescence', the students in this study displayed divergent orientations: on the one hand articulating an informal knowledge which was immediate and transient, never accumulated and invested in relation to a future self and, on the other, translating informal knowledge into educationally legitimated forms, thus invested in the acquisition of cultural capital, in the energetic pursuit of middle class career trajectories. This theme is also significantly complicated by gender and, though I have not discussed this in detail, by the negotiation of 'ethnicities'. For the

account developed here, I have made class and gender more prominent because, in the *classroom contexts* which framed the research, these categories were more consistently enacted in the practices of the students themselves.

Notes

1. I am using 'progressive focusing' not in terms of its wider currency in educational research but, in my usage, to describe a research process involving a series of encounters, each informed by the strengths, weaknesses and puzzles of the previous encounters. Later encounters thus seek to expand, explore and differentiate issues arising out of encounters earlier in the series. As I show in Chapter 3, analysis of data thus leads to further data collection and analysis.

2. In sociology there has been increasing discussion of the value of autobiographical perspectives, particularly from feminist sociologists. In a special issue of *Sociology* (Vol.27 No.1 February 1993), Stanley argues that: 'The auto/biographical I is an inquiring analytic sociological...agent who is concerned in constructing, rather than 'discovering', social reality and sociological knowledge. The use of 'I' explicitly recognises that such knowledge is contextual, situational, and specific, and that it will differ systematically according to the social location (as a gendered, raced, classed, sexualitied, person) of the particular knowledge-producer.' (Stanley, 1993: p.49). See, also, Aldridge, J. (1993) in the same issue of *Sociology;* Stanley, L. (1992); and Steinberg, Epstein and Johnson, (1997).

Introduction

1. Differentiating Youth

In 1972, in Keighley, a small town in West Yorkshire, Simon Frith carried out a study of young people's involvement with popular music. His research, which was conducted in a comprehensive school,[1] was subsequently incorporated in his book *The Sociology of Rock* (Frith, 1978) and in the later American orientated revision *Sound effects: youth, leisure, and the politics of rock 'n' roll* (Frith, 1983). For a brief, incisive, sketch of pop 'as it was lived' there can be few better places to begin. To show how young people engage with popular music is only a part of Frith's larger study, much of which is devoted to an analysis of the music industry and of the 'rock' aesthetic in the wider field of debates around culture. I want to recover the Keighley research here because it represents a strand in Cultural Studies, and in the sociology of youth, which should be of considerable value to those who work with young people, especially teachers. Yet, despite their strengths, youth culture studies have only rarely moved on to develop implications for educational practice. As in Cultural Studies as a whole, questions to do with teaching have been placed as somewhat marginal and perceived as fairly unglamorous. Of course, *Learning to Labour* (Willis, 1977) did, explicitly and at some length, seek to address teachers in its final chapter. But, in the 20

years that have elapsed since, Cultural Studies has become a more broadly established academic discipline without much sense of obligation to address any particular practice outside higher education itself.

The numerous books and articles which came out of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1970s and 1980s defined the discipline and, to the extent that they may have been read by teachers, were influential in the larger context of education. *Profane Culture* (Willis, 1978), *Subculture - The Meaning of Style* (Hebdige, 1979), *Resistance through Rituals* (Hall and Jefferson, 1975) and the retrospective collection *Feminism and Youth Culture* (McRobbie, 1991) are all of enduring interest and should still inform teachers in their engagement with young people (for a critical review see Middleton, 1990: pp.155-71). But these writings do not seek to address teachers explicitly and, like some later monographs, for example *Black Culture, White Youth* (Jones, 1988), are unlikely to secure the attention of more than a small minority. Even for teachers directly involved in media education, these titles will seem tangential to their central concern with the media and of little consequence relative to the many books which offer direct advice about how to teach the subject (for example Masterman 1980; 1985). I want to acknowledge that these, and other, cultural studies of youth should continue to inform

the thinking of teachers concerned with media education. But, in this thesis, I also want to offer, and make a wider case for, studies located *within* encounters between teachers and young people and which thus more directly address questions of educational practice.

I want to present three quite substantial passages from Frith's account of his Keighley research. In the discussion which follows I do two things. First of all, I want to suggest how Frith's work can be, and to some extent has been, taken further. His analysis of the divisions of class, gender and age within 'youth' is crucial and persists throughout my own account. Secondly, I want to inject some autobiographical elements into this chapter, partly to provide comparison with and confirmation of Frith's initiative, but also to frame a more extended account of my own 'motives' in seeking to connect Cultural Studies with media teaching in schools.

The first passage describes a group of mostly middle-class 'Sixth Formers':

> Alison and her friends...had a busy and self-contained social life, meeting weekly at the folk club...at parties in each others' houses, at concerts or the bar at the local universities, at selected pubs. The group tended to come from middle-class backgrounds...but they were not particularly well-off in terms of income, spent a large proportion of non-school time studying, and were consequently at home a lot...

> Music was a background to their lives, radio and records were always on. The records were LPs, chosen carefully and individually and often purchased by saving money after hearing a friend's copy. People listened to music together and often exchanged albums temporarily. Few people in the group had a large record collection...
>
> This group was conscious of itself as a group that was clearly differentiated from the culture of their parents, but what really dominated its members' lives was a sense of possibility. They were all preparing to move on - to universities and colleges, to new towns and opportunities, to new sexual and social and chemical experiences; they were all aware that the group itself was transitional and temporary, that individuals had to maintain their individualism within it. They were articulate and self-aware and valued these qualities in music; they turned to music for support as well as for relaxation. They most valued music that was most apparently "artistic" - technically complex or lyrically poetic - and tastes here went with other interests, in the other arts, in politics, in religion. There were few direct restraints on the activities of this group except members' shortage of money; they were successful at school and at home and rarely clashed with authority. But their life was already a career and the importance of exams and qualifications was fully realized. The resulting tensions made music all the more important - as the context for bopping, relaxing, petting, falling in love, and shouting a temporary "Fuck the world!" (Frith, 1983: pp.209-210)

In the second passage, a younger and more decisively working-class group is represented:

> Craig and his friends were in their last year at school, fifth formers itching to get out. They would leave school without skill or qualification but had been used to failure for years, and school was not so much oppressive now as irrelevant. Their lives already revolved around the possibilities of (unskilled) work - most members of the group were already working part-time - and their leisure reflected this expectation. The group went out (why bother studying) to the youth clubs provided by the local authority or attached to local churches, to

> the pubs that would take them, to the fish-and-chips shop and the bus station and the streets. None of this group was a militant member of any particular gang, but they had skinhead friends and relations and could run casually with them and with the emerging groups of mods and crombies and knew which side they were on in a fight; Friday night, for example, was the traditional time for a trip to Bradford, the boys for a brawl, the girls for a dance at the Mecca.
>
> This group had plenty of free time but little money or mobility, and their leisure was consequently focused on public places, putting them in constant confrontation with the controllers of those spaces - police and bus conductors and bouncers. But home wasn't much freer, and so the boys went out most nights, doing nothing, having a laugh, aware that this was their youth and that their future would be much like the past of their working-class parents. Music was a pervasive part of their lives, in their rooms and clubs, on the jukebox, at the disco... (Frith, 1983: pp.210-211)

And finally a third group occupying a social position intermediate between the preceding two:

> David's and Peter's friends were younger - age fifteen and in the fourth form - but were committed to the academic routine and saw their futures stretching out through the sixth form and college...They were young and lacked the resources and the mobility and the freedom for student life, and in chafing about this they were more aggressively hip at school, in the youth club, and most of all at home, where they'd gather their friends and sit around the record player as if it were Moses, bringing messages from on high. It was important for this lot to distinguish themselves from everybody - teachers, parents, peers. They were hippies, hairies, in their clothes and attitudes and tastes and drugs; and they worked at it, read the music press, got passionate about their records and about the evils of commercialism. They were an elite, a group apart from the masses, even if they were in the same school and youth club and street. (Frith, 1983: p.211).

These contrasts between groups of young people differentially orientated by class and education, and by gender, must be familiar enough to most readers. For some, as for myself, the familiarity may arise because of a youth approximately coincident with the period of Frith's research but it may be that the outlines of his portrayal are still evident in current patterns of educational differentiation and popular cultural engagement. The classroom studies I present in later chapters represent groups of young people across much the same age range, and of comparable diversity in terms of class. Though all of my research was conducted in London, I have incorporated his descriptions into this text because, as will become apparent, there is a productive theoretical tension between the form of his account and that which I offer in later chapters of this thesis. Frith's summary comment on his three groups is this:

> The different youth groups' uses of music were different not because some groups were more resistant to commercial pressures than others, not even because some groups were more organized in subcultural terms than others, but because the groups each had their own leisure needs and interests - Keighley's youth culture patterns were an aspect of the town's social structure, its relations of production. (Frith, 1983: p.212).

However, Frith's account does date from a quarter of a century ago. Rather more recently, and by contrast, David Lusted (1991) has argued for a view of popular cultural experience which is much less divided by class and age:

> Prime time television, magazines, 'pop' music and high street videos, the tabloid press and

> paperbacks are among media *forms* that have penetrated the rhythms and routines of living, the social relations and activities of many teachers and students alike.
>
> This cultural revolution, brought by new technologies and changing social and leisure patterns, takes on a particular force in schooling. New generations of teachers share experience of these features of a swiftly changing culture most directly with their students. This process narrows the culture gap between largely middle-class teachers and especially working-class students, with many more shared cultural experiences, expectations and pleasures... (Lusted, 1991: p.3).

Lusted shifts focus to a future which cannot be adequately understood within the categories of class, age and gender.[2] For Lusted, even the differences between teachers and their students are no longer as firm as they were. This is, perhaps, a useful challenge to the assumption that the 'relations of production' simply determine cultural experience. Thus, though I think he exaggerates the degree of cultural commonality between teachers and students, the possibility that the current cultural experience of young people cannot be explained adequately or only through their 'membership' of circumscribed social categories is one which I acknowledge in the following chapters. As I have suggested, I want to present school based studies from the 1990s to set alongside those from 25 years ago. In doing so I will be more concerned with particular forms of verbal and textual exchange between teacher and taught, somewhat by contrast with the more sociological emphases of earlier work. I don't want to reject Frith's approach but I do want to offer more

detailed consideration of people's self-accounts and of their multi-layered negotiations of social identities.

In recent years, a number of studies have moved substantially in this direction. *Cultural Studies Goes to School* (Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994) is a closely related account. Elsewhere, in *Changing Literacies: Media Education and Modern Culture* (Buckingham, 1993c), David Buckingham has argued that:

> ...we need to look much more concretely and specifically at the diversity of *real* audiences, at subcultures of media users, at the domestic uses of media technology, and the interaction between media use and other social practices and relationships. (Buckingham, 1993c: p.19).
>
> ...'youth' can no longer be seen (if indeed it ever could) as a unitary category. On the contrary, it is now highly fragmented - and here the contrast with earlier eras, for example, if we look back to the invention or discovery of the teenager as a consumer in the 1950s, is quite striking. (Buckingham, 1993c: pp.17-18).

As I will argue in Chapter 3, the development of 'ethnographic' *styles* of enquiry into media audiences (Morley, 1992; Lewis, 1992; Jenkins, 1992; Buckingham, 1993b) has in effect reaffirmed and renewed the case for teachers to go beyond a narrow mission to inculcate scepticism of the media among young people.[3] In the context of public debates which recurrently display adult panic over the meaning of young people's lives, there is every reason for teachers to

be informed by, and where possible participate in, continuing research into the cultures of young people.

The second strand of this 'dialogue' with Frith is autobiographical. In some ways, reading Frith's work from the 1970s makes me ill-at-ease. The scale, the sense of social difference compressed within a constrained milieu, is so familiar it is disconcerting. I remember more than I think I want to and the tensions and conflicts are inseparable from forms of music and the affiliations they implied. My own years in the Sixth Form, for example, between 1968 and 1970, in Beverley, a small town in East Yorkshire, can be recovered and located in much the same social terms as those offered by Frith. By then, late '68 and heading for 17, I'd mainly turned my back on dance-halls, retreated from the sexual rivalry and the rumours of violence and done what I could to put some distance between myself and local mods. Though I'd liked soul and Motown and, maybe, but I'm not sure, The Small Faces, I would not have wanted to admit it in 1967 - not there, in the social scene that defined my 'adolescence'. I tried to put firm boundaries around my self: the Dylan of *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, and *Blonde on Blonde* and the look that went with the last of those (unsmiling, out of focus) was how I handled being 15 and 16. At 17, doing A levels, I often slipped away from school with a friend to sit in his bedroom and listen to the Mothers of

Invention, sometimes Edgard Varèse and, with some discomfort, *Nashville Skyline*. Most of the time, at my desk at home writing essays, I listened to Frank Zappa - *Hot Rats* (over and over again), and, on Fridays, for a night out with my girl-friend, went into Hull to watch films by Pasolini, Bergman, Godard and Bunuel. If they didn't have sub-titles, they were not 'worth' seeing.

Even when I was 15, I didn't buy many records because I couldn't afford them and because owning them felt like making definite choices about who I was - even to see myself with, say, a Beatles album was just too embarrassing. Bob Dylan, The Mothers of Invention, some blues - at that age there wasn't much else. The point about this austere and self-isolating stance was that it had far more to do with staking out a social identity, and sustaining it, than with any more straightforward expression of likes and dislikes in the field of music. Within the small set of friends I had, we defined ourselves by negatives - not hippies, not mods, not even beats really but we probably wouldn't have minded if that's what other people called us. Retrospectively, I can see that we were defining ourselves in terms of a narrow selection of mostly avant-garde cultural heroes - lower middle-class grammar school boys in a provincial town, waiting to leave. We got on with the homework, watched the films with sub-titles, read Alfred Jarry, Albert Camus, William Burroughs

and Gary Snyder and listened to records neither British nor especially popular - Captain Beefheart or Jean-Luc Ponty, not the Stones or The Beatles.

In school, we read Jane Austen and Henry James, Shakespeare and Milton. We liked it too; just about all of it. Of course there wasn't any Media Studies. Earlier, in English, we'd done content analysis of newspapers and, in the Spring of 1966, we had a student-teacher who set us up to write lyrics - somewhat in the style of Donovan or Dylan, needless to say. Otherwise, literature was the 'core' experience for people like us and, whatever the range and diversity of our reading, much of what we could say and what we believed was precisely and inflexibly Leavisite. Within that context, our social investment in a Leavisite discourse was unshakeable: as elite readers of high literature we could hardly concede that the forms we worked at 'understanding' were anything other than intrinsically superior and, moreover, the only proper guide to the larger social world - if not the more immediate one we were then so effectively shutting out.

Since 1970, and leaving both the school and that small town provincial setting, I've no doubt tried to sustain elements of that same social investment but have also thought far more about how peculiarly exclusive that curriculum was and in

what ways the division of legitimate from popular culture, with which I coped well enough, might be transformed.

2. Putting Cultural Studies in Its Place?

To take this autobiographical framing of the issues further, I want to deal with another, later, period. In this case the years are those between 1974 and 1978, a period in which I moved uncomfortably between teaching and research. The issue is that of Cultural Studies and its relationship to the education of young people in secondary schools. The account I offer is selective, informed by one particular construction of my own biography. As such, I am aware of engaging a bundle of anxieties now somewhat tidied up for academic consumption. There are always other ways of telling things. Autobiography is no exception; it has no peculiar transparency and no privileged claim to uncontested truth. But, by these means, in just a few pages, I can suggest the awkwardness and tension between differently located educational practices.

In 1974-5 I taught in schools for the first time. I taught black children either brought over from the Caribbean to join their parents or, increasingly, born in Britain to migrants from Jamaica, Trinidad and the other small islands of the 'British West Indies'. For me, teaching was immediately a matter of close dialogue with people whose cultural experience I knew of, but didn't know; the sense of difference in working closely with Afro-Caribbean students made knowledge a more relative and negotiable matter than, in practice, it had ever seemed before. Within that milieu my

work as a teacher was to support those who might be seen as marginalised or likely to fail, because of cultural and linguistic difference, or because of the way such differences might be interpreted within English education. My previous educational experience - as a grammar school boy and a student - had been a matter of individual ascent in a context of expanding educational provision. Here, the prevailing educational commitment was towards a more inclusive and socially progressive practice.

In the East London schools where I taught, a broadly egalitarian and welfare consensus, familiar since World War II, seemed the unshakeable background to whatever divisions and conflicts might preoccupy the teachers with whom I worked. Of course, in the broader economic and educational context, the underpinnings of this egalitarian and progressive orientation were soon to be challenged and, over subsequent years, eroded. The disintegration of post-war consensus and the end of the long post war boom were shocking in their impact and, from 1976 onwards, elements in and around the Conservative Party have pushed towards the reassertion of hierarchy and of elitism and the legitimation of exclusion. Between my first experience of teaching in 1974-5 and my return to it in 1978, there was an economic and political upheaval which, in education, might be recalled through a contrast between the post-Houghton buoyancy of 1974

and 1975 and the alarm of lurching uncertainly into crisis as 1976 took shape (Jones, 1983, 1989; CCCS Education Group, 1981; CCCS Education Group II, 1991; see, also, Savage, 1991).

From a practice which supported some of those placed most precariously in education I moved, after a few months out of the country,[4] into Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, then a post-graduate research centre. Politically and theoretically its preoccupations were framed by the history of socialism in Britain, reanimated by current innovations in Marxist thought (see Turner, 1990; Harris, 1992). In relation to education, it favoured, though with some complex reservations, the provision of comprehensive state education; culturally, it endorsed and engaged in serious study of all those forms and practices divided from high culture and refused validity elsewhere in education. There seemed therefore every reason to expect some continuity between my sense of (re)formation as a teacher and my involvement with research in Cultural Studies.

The dissonance in such a transition was surprising and troublesome. Retrospectively, I can select out, and construct an argument through, my uneasy perception of a persistent and intractable disparity between the claims of an academic

discourse and the ordinary experience of popular culture to which it referred. The enthusiasm of Cultural Studies for 'the popular' was, perhaps, more for a new theoretical discourse than, at that time, a wish to be attentive to the meanings people might give to their everyday lives. Of course, important empirical research (e.g. Willis, 1977; Morley, 1980; Hobson, 1982) was being conducted by particular individuals but, in the day to day work of some 'sub-groups', theory, in its ecstasies, could flip over into theoreticism, where social practices became no more than objects in thought and knowledge of the real, unless constituted at the heights of theoretical abstraction, was disallowed. Of course, a familiar defence of specialized language in the social sciences is that, like the natural sciences, they refer to phenomena which lie beyond the level of everyday experience and therefore require a distinctive, *necessarily unfamiliar*, language. This has considerable validity. But the domains to which Cultural Studies relates are already interpreted by their participants - the social actors whose subjective agency in part constitutes the 'worlds' in which they live. Interpretation by social analysts is therefore always a matter of working over a pre-interpreted domain, domains of which participants have an existing, if always circumscribed, knowledge (Geertz, 1973; Thompson, 1990). One of the questions that has motivated this thesis is therefore that of how to constitute an effective relationship between those who

routinely inhabit a particular pre-interpreted domain - like a school - and those who produce a specialist discourse representing that domain to others.

At the Centre, two different problems were united: the difficulty and specialization of theoretical discourse was entangled with a lofty refusal of empirically situated knowledges. Together, the effect could be uncomfortably exclusive. And theoreticism itself - which, in the long run, the Centre contested - could produce a dismal paralysis, with the mundane detail of empirical research appearing as dull as mere dirt beneath the shimmering fields of theory. Thus an internal discussion document, from early in 1978,[5] recorded elliptical hints at the difficulties of 'theoreticism' and the 'weakness of research support and ethos' but struggled towards a way of 'capitalis[ing] a massive collective experience' where 'introduction to the Centre is commonly traumatic or intimidating'. In this recollection of an uneasy relation to the radical claims of an increasingly influential intellectual practice, I can admit to an antagonism which surprised me because, in my four previous years of higher education, I had thought of myself as a very theory orientated kind of person. Indeed, it was such a self-perception that, to simplify, led me to the Centre. But, with a year of school teaching cutting between my earlier enthusiasm for Marx, Lévi-Strauss and Sartre, and my

encounter with Cultural Studies, theory looked different, worryingly distant from those people, like my secondary school students, for whom popular cultural forms and practices were everyday rather than visited as strategic objects of academic study.

At that point of awkward transition, it seemed that the field of contemporary Cultural Studies was too much driven by the demands of the academic domain to adequately acknowledge, or begin to address, the question of how its enabling analytical discourse might also connect with the lives of those it explained. To say 'connect with' is perhaps too easy, almost an evasion; I mean to say that it did not seem of much concern to think through how the emergent Cultural Studies might be a radical element in the lives of those who might never experience formal education beyond the age of 16. Cultural Studies was understood by its proponents to be a politically engaged and critical discipline, not just another academic subject; what it lacked was an educational practice in which teachers outside higher education, and their students, could begin to participate.

Despite some particular efforts to connect Cultural Studies with schooling since the 1970s (see Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994; Cohen, 1997), there is a continuing need to generate an educationally refocused Cultural Studies -

informed by those practices of teaching which have not depended upon the presence of students already in possession of a privileged cultural capital. The influence of Cultural Studies in the area of Sixth Form (A Level) Media Studies is obviously an important gain but the value of Cultural Studies needs to be realized in a greater diversity of educational contexts than those associated with the Advanced Level route through the 16 to 19 age phase. Who educational initiatives are for, and what purposes they might serve, are central questions for any newly constituted field of knowledge - Cultural Studies has a history which should sustain something more than a theoretical attempt to answer such questions. Cultural Studies has to engage with the real sense of difficulty which teachers encounter in their work with all those school students whose orientation to education is 'resistant', 'disaffected', or, at least, characterized by prolonged indifference. In the transitions through which those of 15 and 16 pass, the problem of what education might offer, and on what terms, is crucial.

The issue of identities has some importance here, both in thinking through a response to the questions posed above and in reflecting on the aspirations of Cultural Studies as an academic discipline. In both cases, it is worth asking what kind of identity Cultural Studies might form or contribute to - what is the claim made by Cultural Studies in the formation

of new subjectivities? What kinds of new intellectual were to be made through Cultural Studies? What kinds of working practice might Cultural Studies engender or remake? A part of the answer may lie in the reading of Gramsci which informed much cultural theory in the 1970s and 1980s: the intellectuals, in this conception, were organic intellectuals of the subordinate class and, politically, their practice was shaped by the project of a hegemonic socialism and by a continuing relation to, though not containment within, the life of the subordinate class. The working practices of such intellectuals could include teaching but might also range across a variety of practices given an appropriate political inflection. This is one, abstract and general, formulation. Certainly, Cultural Studies, as I experienced it, implied a political positioning within a Gramscian Marxism and, at the time, an identification with a socialist-feminist cultural politics. This explicit and self-conscious politics has now lost its 'local' hegemony and is, perhaps, for its current students, little more than a feature of the 'background' to the Cultural Studies they now encounter.

The question of from where, socially, students of Cultural Studies might come and what their destinations might be has been addressed by some of the polytechnics in which Cultural Studies for undergraduates was established. Some favoured policies which offered broad access and even preferred to

recruit students not reaching higher education through the conventional Advanced Level route. Thus the Department of Cultural Studies at the University of East London, for example, sought to encourage potential students in these terms:

> In our opinion, a subject like Cultural Studies is enriched by recruiting students from diverse social, cultural and intellectual backgrounds as well as from a wide age range. We are particularly interested in offering places to those whose lives have made entry into higher education neither obvious nor easy, and we seek to encourage both school leavers and older students who live in the geographical area of the University and in the wider national and international community.

Such policies were, and where they survive still are, consistent with the social and political project of Cultural Studies as it was conceived through the later 1960s and into the 1970s. Some of the excitement of Cultural Studies lay in its potential for challenging the social relations in which 'academic study' could be conducted. A differently constituted intellectual practice might, it seemed, allow the 'content' of Cultural Studies to be of social and political consequence for its students. The 'academicization' of Cultural Studies and the wider emphasis on instrumentalism in education over the past 20 years has limited and undermined this potential. In a period marked by an intensification of social and economic inequalities, the separation of the academic-intellectual domain from the broader concerns of mass education has hardly diminished. With some particular

exceptions, the realization of a more widely available and diversified educational practice informed by Cultural Studies has, as yet, proved immensely difficult to achieve.

There was a further element in Cultural Studies which, in retrospect, seemed also to compromise its claims to reconstruct established academic practice. Through this period, despite an emerging feminist critique, intellectual argument was sometimes conducted in the language of men at war. To appear theoretically under armed, on the field of Cultural Studies, risked charges of empiricism, the smear of an effeminate cowardice in the thick of mental battle. The language of combat may have derived less from Gramsci's strategic metaphors than from the British Public School tradition and the traces of that masculine elite culture encountered still in our more immediate past (cf. Gillis, 1981; Weeks, 1981; Connell, 1995). But this was not peculiar to the Centre. The wider context of this discursive formation, beyond its particular 1970s Cultural Studies variant, has been discussed by, for example, Renato Rosaldo (Rosaldo, 1993: pp.171-3) in his exploration of the vantage points from which ethnographic research might be conducted. He argues, in effect, for more inclusive modes of intellectual enquiry, distinct from the achievement of a combative intellectual stance (see, also, Stanley, 1990; Harding, 1991; Connell, 1993).

Perhaps I can suggest just how problematic an educational culture Cultural Studies appeared to be, by offering the rhetorical conjunction of two disparate experiences. First, the memory of my most disaffected moments in Beverley Grammar School: an exclusively masculine and hierarchical institution, intensely competitive with honours boards displayed in the hall, an elite of 'Prefects', published examination results in the school magazine and entrance to Oxford and Cambridge elevated above all else. Second, in Cultural Studies at the Birmingham Centre, an implicit hierarchy of 'sub-groups' and the intellectual divisions they represented, a ranking of incoming graduates in terms of their attainments and likely performance and, just as at school, anxiety that you could be made to feel stupid for not already knowing what you were there to find out. These crossed memories, of a 1960s grammar school with 1970s Cultural Studies in the academy, if somewhat elliptically collapsed together, nevertheless underscore that question of what education is for and for whom it confirms a future (Sennett and Cobb, 1972; Bourdieu/Passeron, 1977; Jones, 1992).

I left the Centre in 1978 to teach English in comprehensive schools, and be located thus in a culture of work somewhat sceptical of the academic domain. From that vantage point,

the work that I did for the next ten years was substantially a matter of reappropriating Cultural Studies, attempting to make its perspectives make sense both for me as a teacher and for the young people that I taught. The relationship between such different kinds of intellectual practice is difficult - institutionally separated and governed by widely divergent priorities - but, somehow, I wanted to connect what I read in the field of Cultural Studies with teaching in educational settings far from those available only to a tiny elite (see Richards, 1981/2; 1982; 1983; 1986; 1990). The formation of the Media Teachers' Research Group, at the Institute of Education, in 1987, provided a forum and an 'action research' framework (cf. Kemmis, 1993) for a more systematic exploration of these concerns (see Buckingham, 1990).

I want to conclude this introduction by looking back, briefly, to the work of Iain Chambers, a former student at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies[6] and, along with Dick Hebdige, Paul Willis and Angela McRobbie, one of the few to devote substantial attention to popular music. Chambers contributed to the journal *Screen Education* (which I discuss in Chapter 1) and has since written more extensively about popular music (Chambers 1985, 1986). In 'Pop Music: A Teaching Perspective' (Chambers, 1981) he suggests:

> One of the advantages (and difficulties) of teaching pop music is that it immediately involves the common experience of the students...listening to Boney M while sitting at desks is different from dancing to the music at the local discotheque,

> but...these experiences are organised through a continual employment of such common-sensical categories as 'entertainment', 'leisure' and 'pleasure', and this has pertinent consequences for a teaching situation (not the least being friction that can arise if it is felt that the student's leisure space, the realm of the 'private', is being violated and transformed into a public exercise in academia). At the same time, the initial 'shock' that this provokes can be strategically exploited to prise open the contradictory, but often extremely rich, knowledge that the students have of the material. In transforming pop music into a problematic area of study within the context of the students' own everyday knowledge there emerges the potential for that important tension between how the cultural experience of pop music is lived and of how, through a critical exploration, it can be made to speak with new accents. (Chambers, 1981: p.35).

This, though referring to teaching in higher education, identifies some of the most awkward aspects of that process of making an emotionally 'personalized' dimension of everyday life the object of some public scrutiny. In common with Chambers, I do see popular music as an important focus for teaching which seeks to engage with the more immediate cultural experience of young people; such teaching should seek to develop modes of reflective, social, self-understanding (see Moss, 1989; Jones, 1992; Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994). But Chambers compounds what he describes by writing as if teachers should be concerned to forcefully 'interrogate' popular culture, trained to 'violate', 'strategically exploit', and to 'prise open'. Thus, though he is reporting a difficulty which many other teachers might recognize, he writes as if the privileged knowledge of the

teacher is not itself open to question. Here, the power of academically constituted knowledge appears as the means to compel the 'cultural experience of pop music' to speak in terms the teacher wishes to hear. Chambers never provides an account of a particular teaching situation and, though the force of his metaphors becomes more muted, their combative tenor has much in common with a more pervasive masculine imagery of battle and conquest in Cultural Studies writing. Whatever the wider issue, the implication I want to emphasise is that, in Chambers' teaching perspective, the study of popular music is still too firmly anchored within the orthodoxy of the professional competence of teachers and academics. The 'correct' form of knowledge of this dimension of students' experience is, ultimately, to be determined by the teacher.

Chambers goes on to make a case for more attentive analysis of music:

> ...the pertinence of particular cultural relations in the formation of pop music must not be permitted to obscure the specific instance of the music. That aural reality, the specificity of the sounds of British pop is, after all, where our discourse begins. How can we avoid a seemingly inevitable bifurcation between musicological approaches, on the one hand, and cultural analyses, on the other? (Chambers, 1981: p.36).

To overcome this 'bifurcation', he maps out some priorities for teaching the history of British pop music placing, for example, particular stress on Afro-American sources. These

priorities are important (see Green, 1988), but what disappears from his account is the particularity of encounters with students, the dialogues which might take place in such encounters (between students as well with a teacher) and the possibility that the knowledge he advocates might be reconstructed - or at least somewhat challenged - through the various cultural experiences that, in another way of teaching, might be 'permitted' their place in the classroom.

In the following chapters, rather than elaborate the body of knowledge - popular music - as teachers and academics in the field may wish it to be, I have made my efforts, as a teacher, to engage with students' existing understanding of music in their own experience a more distinct presence than in other accounts. Teaching can be conceived in terms which always make the higher value of the teacher's knowledge prevail; such teaching might therefore notice all that students lack in their knowledge of popular music, giving priority to the task of transmitting more academic accounts of the field. Of course, I would not want to neglect such accounts (see Middleton, 1990; McClary, 1991; Frith, 1996) but, whatever their scope or sophistication, they are always constrained and reformed in their reception by particular groups of students. Such constraints and 'reformations' may be experienced by teachers as just frustrating impediments to

the knowledge they wish students to understand. It is not surprising if teachers see students as failing to progress beyond their existing positions within excessively particular, and relatively closed, forms of knowledge. But such a perception does assume that the forms of popular knowledge, as yet unarticulated within educationally constituted discourses, are therefore always inchoate, waiting to be rendered meaningful, and to be given depth, by a retrospective commentary from another, more authoritative, vantage point.

Of course, I can hardly exempt my own account from its implication in this process. However, I do want to argue that teaching should create the conditions in which the cultural logic of students' experience can emerge - conditions which favour 'dialogue' rather than 'interrogation'. The purposes of teaching about popular music might best be defined through an effort to explore how both teacher and taught position themselves through various expressions of taste and musical affiliation. As will be apparent in this thesis, this is not an easy matter. In particular, questions around what knowledge about music might be, and about who might be judged to have such knowledge, will become central and troublesome.

Notes

1. Frith (1978) comments: 'My sample was 105 pupils from one of Keighley's two comprehensive schools and was representative of the school's social and academic mix. In the town as a whole only upper-middle-class children were creamed off to direct-grant or public schools. I also talked to pupils' friends who were at the other comprehensive school or had already started at college and university.' (p.216)

2. In the period since Frith's account, notions of 'lifestyle' have emerged to complicate, sometimes to displace, 'class'. Lusted is, implicitly, closer to a kind of 'lifestyle' analysis.

3. See Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994) and Buckingham, Grahame and Sefton-Green (1995).

4. 'Hanging out' in a Japanese village where my wife was doing field-work for a Ph.D in social anthropology.

5. 'Priorities 2 77-78', dated February 4th 1978.

6. He contributed to the Summer 1975 issue of *Working Papers in Cultural Studies - Resistance through Rituals* (Double issue 7/8); see 'A Strategy for Living: Black music and white subcultures', pp.157-166 (Hall and Jefferson, 1975).

Chapter 1: Popular Music and Media Education

1. Media Education

Media education has grown rapidly in recent years, particularly in the upper secondary and tertiary sectors. At its centre is the study of television and film and of other media in which visual images are a significant component. The place of popular music has been more uncertain though, since the late 1980s, it has been more commonly registered as among the objects of study appropriate to Media Studies.[1] Nevertheless, relative to the visual media, the study of popular music is unevenly developed, often regarded as 'difficult' and may still be regarded as a less than essential concern.[2]

The case for an engagement with popular music in media education, in my account, follows from the critique of the National Curriculum for English articulated, with others, by Ken Jones:

> ...learning is always a social process, which develops in and through the encounters between the experience and the discourses of students and the institutional and intellectual practices of the school...as teachers of English and Media Studies...[we] point to forms of curricular and pedagogic practice which, being based on a kind of dialogue with students, have little in common with the extraordinarily prescriptive 'relevance' of the DES. (Jones, 1992: p.2)

If a dialogue with students of Media Studies is to engage with the central components of their cultural experience, popular music should not be ignored in favour either of texts regarded as more 'political' (television news, perhaps) or as more 'aesthetically' accessible (film and television narratives, for example). Indeed, if one of the most insistent motives for media education has been to acknowledge and work with the cultural interests of school students, then popular music deserves a more central place. From outside media education, Gunther Kress has also argued for a more flexible and 'innovative' curriculum than that imposed by the National Curriculum. In some respects, I share his view:

> A curriculum is a design for the future. That is its most crucial characteristic, among many others. A curriculum provides, even if entirely implicitly, the knowledge, the principles, and the modes of thinking, the possibilities of action which form the stuff with which, around which, and out of which young people can, if they wish, make themselves as social subjects. (Kress, 1995: p.9)

The difference, however, between this perspective and that of authors much closer to the detail of actual practice (see Moss, 1989; Buckingham, 1990; Richards, 1992) is that, from a standpoint in the practice of media teaching, the curriculum is misconceived where the stress falls too heavily upon 'provision'. The encounter between teacher and taught is always more than a 'delivery' of the curriculum and, even defined as 'dialogue', is thus simplified and idealized (see

Jones, 1992: pp.124-8). Questions of identity, and of its negotiation in such encounters, are crucial. To avoid teaching 'about' popular music in media education is, effectively, to evade such questions. Music has been noted as an especially significant resource for young people's negotiation of their identities (Willis, 1978; Frith, 1983; Willis, 1990; McRobbie, 1994). In their detailed study of Media Studies in practice, *Cultural Studies Goes to School* (Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994; see below), for example, Buckingham and Sefton-Green argue:

> Music may provide access to a more complex system of symbolic meaning than that which is available locally, in the peer group or family. In this way, it can provide a means of claiming a positive status for identities that are rejected or undervalued; of rejecting the official identities proposed by the family, school or workplace; and of negotiating or aspiring to new identities beyond those that seem to be on offer. (Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994: p.64)

To declare, with Kress, that 'the curriculum is a design for the future' has a tactical value in the political argument around the National Curriculum. But it risks directing attention away from school students for whom matters of present identity and immediate cultural affiliation matter at least as much as the 'skills' they might require in the 21st century.

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The main purpose of this chapter is to review the published accounts which compose the fields of media education and of music education. This is, of course, a formidable task but my concern is to engage with both fields only with reference to questions of popular music and its place in the secondary school curriculum. The vicissitudes of secondary schooling have been central to the growth and proliferation of media education and, on the whole, that history has been characterised by a more particular concern with the teaching of young people in their last two years of compulsory schooling, between the ages of 14 and 16. Of course there have also been developments in lower secondary and primary media education and, from the latter part of the 1980s,[3] in media work with the 16-19 age phase. Where these relate to my central focus, they will be discussed, if somewhat briefly. The period in which significant publication has occurred stretches at least from the early 1960s onwards. However, a substantial corpus of media education advocacy and advice accompanied the introduction of GCSE Media Studies in the 1980s and it is this moment which demands the closest attention.

It should be acknowledged that, in reviewing this array of published materials, there may be important instances of practice which, unrepresented in that domain, remain

unrecorded here. There is scope for a history of media education to be constructed through the collection of unpublished documents and the oral recollections of teachers who have worked in the field. This is not something I have attempted, though elements of such accounts do enter into later chapters, either through my own experience of teaching Media Studies in secondary schools in the 1980s, or through memories offered by teachers whose views on current and future practice I had sought.

Media education has gathered its momentum in a period marked by expanded and intensified patterns of material consumption and by the diversification of technologies of communication. The cultural centrality of print has been undermined by a wide array of media in which combinations of visual and aural forms of representation predominate. Film and television in their rapidly multiplying manifestations are of major importance here; so too are those forms in which an enhanced visual component, in combination with print, animates their representational power. Media education has addressed these shifts in the configuration of cultural forms and has achieved a coherence and credibility widely acknowledged if, in the first half of the 1990s, unpopular with influential factions within the Conservative Party. Among teachers, despite the common preeminence of print in their own cultural formation,[4] there is a continuing

engagement with many aspects of the visual media. However, sound has received less attention and, on the whole, popular music has remained a relatively peripheral concern even for teachers of Media Studies. Technologies in which sound is definitive, or in which it combines with the visual, are clearly of growing social significance (see Du Gay et al, 1997). Young people, perhaps particularly those 'in adolescence', are notably alert to and enthusiastic about sound technologies, and yet media education has not realised, in its practice, an adequate means of exploring this dimension of cultural experience.

Tentatively, the reasons for this may be attributed to the real difficulty for teachers, already formed in their 'professional' identities, in rethinking their practice and, more importantly, in securing the time to develop the knowledge and skill which the study of popular music requires. Certainly, it is relatively rare for teachers of Media Studies, themselves educated most often within the limits of English or related literary studies, to be proficient in reading or performing music. Music education has itself been marginal to most state secondary schools and it is only those whose families have had both the income and the commitment to 'serious' music that are likely to have acquired musical knowledge through forms of private supplementary education. It may also be the case that

teachers with histories of private music education are culturally distanced from popular forms and are thus less likely to have made the risky passage from English to Media Studies. My own education included no musical training and such training seemed available only to a tiny fraction of pupils in each year of the grammar school I attended. It may be, therefore, that the lack of a developed commitment to work on popular music in Media Studies is symptomatic of the long term priorities of a school curriculum formed in the early years of this century and, of course, reaffirmed in the National Curriculum, as the end of the century approaches. The formation of teachers of Media Studies, mostly in disciplines with a literary or social science base, has doubtless meant that few, myself included, have the cultural resources to develop a cohesive teaching practice around a medium of which, in common with most people without formal musical education, we find it difficult to speak.

There is another way of understanding the slow pace of a media pedagogy appropriate to popular music. For much of its history, media education has been dominated by a concern with the protection of pupils from manipulation and mystification by the media industries. The practices of news and advertising have therefore drawn the most consistent and productive attention. Of course, popular music has, from time to time, been targeted with a similar intent but it has not

been regarded as a domain of comparable importance, perhaps because it has been seen as addressing only young people already assumed to be a powerless, pre-political minority with necessarily ephemeral interests. If growing up, and out of, a youthful saturation with 'pop' could be regarded as inevitable then, despite such immediate obsessions, the school student of the media should be directed towards more enduring problems of the kind which teachers, and other adults, recognised and found disturbing. Other, not incompatible, reasons for avoiding 'pop' could be suggested. First of all, it is notoriously difficult for teachers to know more than students about popular music or, often, to persuade students that what teachers know is 'more' and important. Secondly, because an enjoyment of popular music in youth is intense and vigorously defended by school students, to approach with a critical, demystificatory intent is likely to meet determined resistance. Thirdly, though 'pop' is an industry it is also, and this has been widely acknowledged, also a collection of genres in which much that is innovative and, sometimes, politically challenging can be articulated. For a combination of reasons of this kind - because it has seemed too ambiguous an object of study - it has been left to one side in pursuing what teachers could attack with more confidence.[5]

It is only in the late 1980s that a more tentative interest in the pleasures of media consumption, and a more empirically informed grasp of audience engagements with popular texts, began to emerge among media teachers.[6] Such elements may have coexisted with the more demystificatory strand in the practice of many teachers for many years but they were not easily articulated amid discourses privileging moral and political critique (see Moss, 1989). Certainly, as early as 1964, in *The Popular Arts*, Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, were able to record some acknowledgement of popular pleasures, if in terms which suggested their own tastes and not those of young people at the time. Of course, the political circumstances of the later 1970s should be seen as demanding a more combative Media Studies than that advocated as Labour entered power in the 1960s. The sense of crisis in politics and education after 1976, and the emergence of the authoritarian populism of the Thatcher era, generated a need from within Media Studies to make teaching a credible political response and, from without, it was necessary to make Media Studies appear a serious and rigorous discipline, not compromised by attention to what might appear frivolous.

'How to teach about the media'

Many of the teaching 'hand-books' which defined the discipline in the late 1970s and 1980s made little mention of popular music at all. *Teaching about Television* (1980), by

Len Masterman, was both widely read and influential in the shaping of media teaching in schools. Television was recognised, increasingly, as the central medium for study; more pervasive than film, and more powerful than radio, it was justifiably a priority to explore ways in which to develop its place as an object of classroom analysis. As with many other Media Studies books of the period, music, to the extent that it was discussed, was represented by the BBC 1 weekly programme *Top of the Pops*.[7] In a sense, therefore, these 'hand-books' accord popular music only that degree of visibility allowed by a medium criticised for its exclusions and neglect of cultures beyond the horizon of the dominant ideology.

Masterman's text, completed in 1978, draws upon his own practice, and that of colleagues, through the 1970s. A kind of classroom democracy is identified as responsible for *Top of the Pops*' entry into his lesson; he makes it clear that he did not choose the programme:

> For the purposes of this exercise any programme will do - a point worth stressing, for what is being taught is a method of analysis which will yield insights across the whole output of the medium. Deciding by majority vote the class choose, unsurprisingly, *Top of the Pops* (BBC1). (Masterman, 1980: p.62.)

The exercise, consistent with much subsequent media teaching, is conceived conceptually; here, the concepts to be

introduced were iconography, narrative structure, spectacle, genre and mediation. The difficulty is that, despite Masterman's enthusiasm for 'progressive' teaching, the meaning of the students' choice, and the meanings of the programme for them, are subordinated to his definition of what the lesson is to mean for them. His own account of the meaning of the programme seems to arise out of an 'accidental' juxtaposition with *Gardeners' World* rather than through any comparison with other programming addressed to young people or, indeed, any account of the broader field of popular music at the time (the early days of punk, the emergence of reggae into widespread popularity, particularly through Bob Marley). His comment on the programme is this:

> It isn't a chronological age which has drawn together the blooming young and fast-fading disc-jockeys and stars, but an attitude. To be young in this sense is to exist butterfly-like in an a-causal world to which one has a totally passive relationship. Here-and-now, celebrated because it *is*, becomes emptied of meaning (cf. the aimless meandering talk of all disc-jockeys everywhere)...the attitude locks wonderfully well into the interests of capitalism. Likewise the expression of a tentatively emerging identity, a 'natural' desire to be different, to be an individual is achieved through an ownership, particularly of records and clothes, which presupposes the possession of money, and an absence of adult constraints in spending it...it holds out the promise of eternal youth through constant consumption. (Masterman, 1980: p.64)

Of course, this reproduces elements of a Leavisite pessimism, implicitly positioning young people as the recipients of a corrupting consumerism and the media teacher as intervening to challenge the transmission of such an ideology. Unfortunately, Masterman does not pursue these particular issues more fully and, in his later book, *Teaching the Media* (1985)[8] there is no further discussion of popular music and of its place in the cultures of young people.

It must be emphasised that this absence is not peculiar to the work of Len Masterman. The *Papers from the Bradford Media Education Conference* (1985), though clearly representing a greater diversity of views about the relationship of audiences to the media,[9] give no space to a discussion of popular music. *TV and Schooling* (1985) acknowledges the popularity of *Top of the Pops* with young people and includes brief but enthusiastic comments (from Richard Dyer) suggesting the variety of satisfactions which may be derived from its viewing in the parentally regulated domestic context; on the other hand, Bob Ferguson offers grim warnings that the 'pull to ideological containment via the smile of Terry Wogan or the inanity of many of the presenters of *Top of the Pops* is very strong.'[10] Otherwise, the collection has nothing much else to say about popular music on television. Nor, indeed, does Mike Clarke's *Teaching Popular Television* (1987).

The attention devoted to television - occasioned in part by a growing recognition of its importance for children - has been paralleled by a neglect of radio and of the diversification of its technologies of reception (Du Gay, 1997). Young people, beyond childhood, do continue to watch television but there can be little doubt that music radio acquires considerable importance for them as well. But still, in the mid 1980s, the perspective which prevailed in the formulation of media education priorities was more attentive to the production and transmission of media texts than to the mixing of media at the point of reception, in the everyday lives of young people. Assuming the domestic centrality[11] of television, for all concerned, had the effect of bracketing out other, and particularly sound, technologies.

In fact, this situation has persisted in published accounts of media education through into the 1990s. Between 1987 and 1993, there is growing acknowledgement of the importance of popular music in media education but, with a few slight exceptions, little detailed discussion is devoted to how it might be developed through teaching. *Learning the Media* (1987), by Alvarado, Gutch and Wollen, makes interesting, but brief, reference to *Top of the Pops* in chapters devoted to realism and to gender. They suggest the possibility that, in common with other pop video programmes, 'the music's beat,

its rhythm and the outré world that "pop" connotes mark a televisual world that is far out of the "real".'[12] But they explore this no further, countering their own proposal with the view that such effects are recuperated within a realist mode. More usefully, they provide some discussion of sexualities in both *Top of the Pops* and *The Tube*, venturing the view that 'even a programme as blatantly sexist as *Top of the Pops* offers itself to alternative, if subdued readings' (Alvarado *et al*, 1987: pp.192-3). The investigation of such readings is not within the scope of their study and the chapter ends with questions which need to be pursued through teaching which is reflective and research orientated. There are other references to music in chapters addressing questions of representation with respect to age and race but, again, they imply questions going beyond their introductory and advisory intent.

In 1987, the Media Teachers' Research Group was formed at the University of London Institute of Education. Its work was published in 1990, in *Watching Media Learning: Making Sense of Media Education* (Buckingham, 1990). The various research papers contributed to this collection derived largely from empirical classroom research and attempted to investigate the terms in which young people, in schools and colleges, understood both particular aspects of the media and the practices of media teaching which they encountered. Perhaps

because the research involved reflection upon already established forms of media teaching - image analysis and video production for example - no examination of popular music entered into the work of the group. Indeed, my own contribution derived largely from attempts to teach about advertising. The present study is, in part, an attempt to address this absence and, in fact, during the period of my own research, two parallel studies of teaching popular music have been published in books co-written by David Buckingham and previous contributors to *Watching Media Learning*. Though *Cultural Studies Goes to School* (Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994) and *Making Media: Practical Production in Media Education* (Buckingham, Grahame and Sefton-Green, 1995) are not 'hand-books' they share much the same ground as this thesis and thus demand some comment at this point.

The importance of *Cultural Studies Goes to School* (1994) and *Making Media* (1995) is that, consistent with the project initiated in the writing of *Watching Media Learning* (1990), they address, through empirical research,[13] the *difficulty* of classroom practice in media education. In neither of these more recent publications are the problems and the messiness of actual practice displaced by the desire to offer advice on what teaching about popular culture should be like. Moreover, both these recent studies emphasise the *particular* awkwardness of teaching about popular music. For example, in

Chapter 4 of *Cultural Studies Goes to School*, 'Hardcore Rappin': Popular Music, Identity and Critical Discourse', Buckingham and Sefton-Green report their teaching of an A Level unit in which they 'encouraged the students to produce "secondary texts" aimed at specific audiences - that is texts *about* music, rather than music itself' (Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994: p.61). They comment that:

> Our broader aim in this unit of work was to find a way of teaching about popular music which enabled students to engage with, and to reflect upon, its *cultural* status. Existing Media Studies teaching materials tend to focus primarily on pop as an industrial product, and on issues such as marketing, promotion and distribution. In the process, the music itself and the meanings and pleasures that students derive from it seem to be at risk of disappearing from view.
>
> Perhaps inevitably, this was an uncomfortable process. One of the major difficulties of teaching about popular music - and the reason why we suspect many teachers avoid it - is that it highlights the tensions between teachers' and students' perspectives. (Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994: p.62)

Similarly, in *Making Media*, Grahame argues, in her detailed account of an A Level 'Basic Production' module, that there are peculiar demands to be faced in seeking to engage with popular music in the classroom. She observes that:

> In common...with many other Media Studies teachers, my experiences of teaching with and about pop music have been instructive and challenging, if not entirely unproblematic. Conventional wisdom has tended to assume that the more relevant and pleasurable the area of study, the greater the engagement and creativity of students' responses;

> but with popular music it is precisely those aspects of relevance, pleasure, personal investment and cultural status which can militate against successful teaching. You have to be pretty confident about your own authority and relationships within the class to take on a subject about which you are invariably both less informed than your students, and likely to adopt a rather different discourse; and you need steel nerves and a good sense of humour to negotiate the minefield of personal taste, sub-cultural affiliation and street credibility generated by different musical preferences...it is often hard enough to persuade young people even to *listen* to music they don't like, let alone to engage in critical discourse about it; but to encourage students to publicly analyse its meanings and significance - personal, emotional, ideological, industrial, economic - is a hazardous enterprise indeed. (Buckingham, Grahame and Sefton-Green, 1995: p.106)

As will be apparent in later chapters, my own approach to this 'hazardous enterprise', and the basis for some of what I propose in my final chapter, has been to examine the negotiation of identities between teacher and taught and to advocate forms of 'reflective practice' in which teachers' own autobiographical considerations come into play. Thus, though my own research and the work of Buckingham, Grahame and Sefton-Green has its origins in a common project, my own study attends more to the *relation* between teacher and taught and to the limitations, and some of the possibilities, of such institutional encounters. In both *Cultural Studies Goes to School* and *Making Media*, attention is given to the students and to their work but the researchers' own presence, as teachers and as 'ex-youth', is left relatively unexplored in terms of its implications both for what they did with the

students and for what they might do in further developments of Media Studies practice.

There *are* other Media Studies books also published in the 1990s which do at least list popular music among the objects of study of interest to media education. David Lusted's edited collection, *The Media Studies Book* (1991)[14] has no contribution which represents this aspect of the field but, in his emphasis on the conceptual organization of media teaching and his recognition of 'the cultural context in which teachers and their students work' (Lusted, 1991: p.3), Lusted began, as I suggested in the introduction to this thesis, to suggest an approach to music which has considerable potential. In drawing the outline of everyday social involvement with a variety of media and in suggesting that some new patterns of attention are being evolved by new generations, Lusted shifts the focus to a future which cannot be adequately understood within the terms of discrete media and in ignorance of audiences. This is vital to the project of developing the study of popular music where teachers may often rely too much on the knowledge they have of what was once 'their own' music; histories have their importance but are most credible when engaged with making sense of emergent tendencies, of what is new and inchoate in everyone's lives.

Three publications from the British Film Institute require some comment here, though in none of them is there any significant attempt to further the study of popular music. *New Directions: media education worldwide* (Bazalgette *et al*, 1992), compiled from papers presented at the 1990 Media Education colloquy in Toulouse, does not record any contribution relating to music. The curriculum statement *Secondary Media Education* (Bowker, 1991), is similarly unconcerned with music, though it is mentioned[15] and is therefore acknowledged to belong in this subject domain.[16] The very wide ranging and substantial reader produced by the British Film Institute in collaboration with the Open University, *Media education: an introduction* (Alvarado and Oliver Boyd-Barrett, 1992), is remarkable in that the most emphatic assertions of the importance of popular music are to be found among extracts dating from the early 1960s and early 1970s. The first comes from Hall and Whannel (1964) and, despite their use of 'jazz' to represent popular music, includes observations of continuing relevance:

> The opportunist teacher who embraces the leisure interests of his (sic) pupils in the hope of leading them to higher things is as frequently unsympathetic to the really valuable qualities of popular culture as his colleague who remains resolutely hostile...Even when this doctrine is presented in its more progressive dress as 'beginning with the child's interests' it remains unsatisfactory. The assumption is that we can begin with jazz but with the intention of moving towards concert music...Now jazz music and the movies have their own special virtues but it is doubtful if these can be revealed when they are

> regarded as only stepping-stones in a hierarchy of taste. If these virtues are not revealed, if in handling jazz and films we do not confront their essential qualities, then their study will not result in a real growth of awareness. (Quoted from Alvarado and Boyd-Barrett, 1992: p.25).

Subsequent references to Cole Porter and Ella Fitzgerald, at a time when The Beatles were becoming massively popular and when early Motown (see Morse, 1971) was achieving some success in Britain, compromise the intentions of their argument. But the place they give to music, alongside film, and their refusal of a 'hierarchy of taste', constitute orientations for the study of popular culture which have yet to be adequately realized and which have been significantly marginalized in legislation for a National Curriculum.

An extract from *Mass Media and the Secondary School* (Murdock and Phelps, 1973) also represents some important advocacy, in this case from someone the authors describe as 'a young music mistress in a large mixed comprehensive school in London':

> I think it is essential that any music teacher today should take account of the vast amount of music the pupils hear through the mass media. I do not mean that entire lessons should be given over to 'pop' but that it should be treated as a branch of music, with an equal right to be enjoyed as much as any other. The teacher must then go on to help the children decide for themselves what they like or dislike *within each type*. (Quoted from Murdock and Phelps, 1973: pp.38-42)

Murdock and Phelps comment:

> The emphasis here is on the teacher being aware of and open to the nature of pupils' everyday cultural experiences and attempting to build bridges between the classroom and the world of leisure. (Quoted from Murdock and Phelps, 1973: p.41)[17]

Of course, as with Hall and Whannel, there are elements of the discourse of 'discrimination' in these remarks but their importance here is to register the gulf between the recognition of these cultural priorities in the 1960s and 1970s and the continuing difficulty of developing their implications twenty and thirty years later. Working with 'everyday cultural experiences', as Lusted argues, is essential to media teaching and cannot, on that basis, justifiably ignore the pervasive engagement with music. Angela Devas, in a piece written for the BFI/OU collection, records the enthusiasm of her students for popular music though, in this context, her priority is to teach about the popular press:

> Thinking about the GCSE Media Studies syllabus, I was aware that some parts could claim to be more 'fun' orientated than others; pop music is one area which teachers anticipate will interest their pupils, while the structure of the press industry cannot claim the same glamour...(Alvarado and Boyd-Barrett, 1992: pp.381-2).

It is perhaps illustrative of the problem that here, in publication if not in her teaching, the account then veers

away from music to the implicitly more serious matter of the press. As the collection as a whole perhaps inadvertently reveals, there is a problem for media education when it appears to dwell on mere 'fun' and not therefore, in this epistemology, on the real world.

Dan Fleming, in his book *Media Teaching* (1993), does make a more committed attempt to develop teaching about popular music:

> One of the biggest problems with doing any kind of classroom activity on popular music is that it can all unravel into disconnected exercises on album design, the role of the DJ, the music video etc., without ever engaging the learner's sense that something about the music really matters. Indeed the accumulation of such 'demystifying' activities can leave young people distrustful of their own original sense that it does matter...(Fleming, 1993: p.280).

This is an incisive observation and one which is particularly relevant to the accounts of classroom activity which I offer in later chapters. Fleming strives to place 'the learner' as crucial to the formulation of any media study and, in the context of music, he proposes a strategy to anchor activities in:

> ...the ways in which love is differently placed within both the music and, simultaneously, the learner's modes of experience...only by the shared effort to place expression of 'love' within the space defined by the different possible classifications and framings of the concept will we be able, in our classrooms, to touch the moment where the grain of the voice, the music, the

> 'cultural knowledge' that attaches itself to the performers, all connect with the listener where it matters. And if we don't approach those moments of connection, of mattering, we will reduce classroom encounters with popular music to an empty 'exposure' of the industry's techniques. If we do, on the other hand, then work on the industry more generally will become a valuable way of critically reframing the moments of connection. (Fleming, 1993: p.281).

In a general way, this is helpful, but it does lack any full acknowledgment of the force of institutional practices in the constitution of social relationships within classrooms and between teachers and their students. Furthermore, though cultural diversity is referred to at various points in the book, the extent to which cultural differences - articulated with relations of class and of gender, themselves constitutive of cultural differences now too narrowly conceived as 'racial' and ethnic - shape the meanings given to popular texts is subordinated in the production of what is, of course, an advisory 'hand-book' for teachers.

To conclude this brief review of the advice offered to media teachers, I want to note two further publications. First, Andrew Hart's *Understanding the Media* (1991) and, second, David Buckingham's pamphlet (already cited in my introduction), *Changing Literacies: Media Education and Modern Culture* (1993). Hart, in common with Fleming, makes more affirmative references to popular music than many of the

earlier books discussed in this section. He comments that pop is 'a massive industry' and 'a space in which individuals are invited to become uniquely themselves' and that 'a systematic study of pop demands a place in any Media Studies curriculum' (Hart, 1991: pp.197-9). His discussion of pop is mostly located in a chapter entitled 'Promotion and Persuasion' and this alone tends to imply a strong industry orientation. In fact, in this case, the problematic notion of 'a space in which individuals...become uniquely themselves' is left, despite the emphasis placed on it, suspended between the impression that this is a misconception encouraged in the marketing of music and the possibility that popular music practices are crucial to the process of self-delineation and the experience of cultural agency. Hart implies something of both these polarities and in his conclusion, comments of both advertising and pop:

> ...they are the persuasive tools of commerce, but...they are such important components of our cultural identities and relate so closely to our sense of who we are. This sense is constantly created and sustained through our interactions with the media. When we understand the limits of persuasion as well as its power, we will know that we can shape our identities ourselves. (Hart, 1991: p.214.)

This is an exceptionally difficult issue for media teaching and, perhaps inescapably with popular music, involves bringing critical discourses to bear upon personally demarcated subjectivities in the public, institutionally

regulated, context of the classroom. As I have suggested, Fleming's later publication attempts to address this problematic encounter, if somewhat schematically. My own intention here is to consider these difficulties through the detail of particular classroom studies.

The importance of Buckingham's pamphlet, though not an advisory document as such, needs some brief reiteration here. He makes a case for the development of teaching informed by a more subtle and complex grasp of audiences, going beyond earlier, anxious, efforts to instil suspicion of the media among young people. In the context provided by an expansion in qualitative audience research (see Morley, 1992; Buckingham, 1993a; Buckingham, 1993b), questions about what teachers know and what their teaching means to their students have become more central, somewhat displacing the necessary imperatives of the media 'hand-books' and encouraging a more reflective practice (see, again, Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994; Buckingham, Grahame and Sefton-Green, 1995; also, Moss, 1989).

Teaching Materials

I want to turn my attention now to the teaching materials which have come from within media education and which have, on the whole, been intended to support the teaching of GCSE

Media Studies. It is not my intention to offer a detailed critical analysis of these materials but to show what priorities they sustain and what their use might accomplish. It is probable that the publication of teaching materials has had a more decisively formative effect, in the period of the GCSE's implementation, than those teachers' guides which more tentatively gestured towards the relatively unexplored field of popular music.

Two substantial publications, both dating from 1989, have defined the concerns of media education with respect to popular music. *The Music Business* (Blanchard *et al*, 1989) and *Wham! Wrapping* (Ferrari and James, 1989) are closely related teaching packs though the first is, above all, an 'industry simulation' and the latter a monumental case-study which, in its devotion to a single band, echoes the acts of fandom represented within its pages.[18] The rationale for this singular act of attention is, however, entirely consistent with the conceptual matrix established as the basis for media education through the latter part of the 1980s. In this instance, the transition from a more narrowly conceived notion of the 'industry' to that of the 'institution', embracing the more extensive circuits of distribution and consumption, as well as production, motivates the expanded focus of the studies they recommend (see Branston, 1987).

Wham! Wrapping proposes an understanding of popular music as an institution in the following terms:

> a) Music as social product such as in dancing, through which interpersonal (often sexual) relationships can be formed and cultural identification, knowledge and history can be learnt.
>
> b) Music as economic product through the financial and industrial structures, such as the economic impact of new technology, new musical styles and new consumer markets.
>
> c) Music as media product through its use in various media, issues surrounding copyright and censorship laws and the development of new media markets. (Ferrari and James, 1989: p.1)

Certainly this orientation towards a more inclusive notion of the 'institution', with its acknowledgement of how disparate the sites of the production of meaning around popular music might be, is more helpful than a view which insists only upon the massively determining power of the industry. Nevertheless, the section devoted to 'consumption' is less substantial than those which realize the pack's sub-title - 'Teaching the Music Industry' and, further, tends to become too contained by the problem of fandom as pathology.

The Music Business occupies the same ground. The account of the term 'institution' offered by Blanchard, Greenleaf and Sefton-Green (all of whom also contributed to the 'industry' section of *Wham! Wrapping*) is, in its particular reference to music, similarly both constructive and daunting:

> In essence, it means a set of complex but interrelated processes, practices and conditions and is concerned with the kinds of relationships which might exist between the various participants (consumers, artists, managers, record companies) in, say, the music business. For example, it is impossible to discuss the release and promotion of a particular single without considering the institutional practices and values which resulted in a decision being made to sign the band in the first place; the kind (and value) of the record deal which was signed; the marketing strategies felt to be the most appropriate, as well as in the consumers' response. (Blanchard *et al*, 1989: p.5)

To support teaching which might enable students to realize an understanding of music in these terms, the pack provides very sophisticated simulation materials which also, importantly, include specially recorded pieces of music on cassette. However, these materials illustrate one of the difficulties of what can be a problematic practice: the knowledge which the simulation intends to make available is also a prerequisite for its enactment and thus, despite the aspiration to move beyond the conventional routines of classroom instruction, it demands a particular orientation to learning which may be difficult to sustain among some school students in the latter stages of compulsory schooling (see Chapters 4 and 5). This may seem to be 'simply' a matter of pedagogy but it is also a consequence of the priority given either to 'industry' or to a particular balance of concepts within the larger conception of 'institution'. The concepts of 'consumer' and of 'consumer's response', like that of 'fan', are too reductive: they position listeners and dancers

as too much the recipients of meanings already mapped out elsewhere.

What these packs attempt to provide is a necessary dimension of the knowledge which should be furthered through media education. But the uses of music in particular social contexts, if shaped by industrial-technological strategies (see Du Gay, 1997), are also particular social tactics which exceed the circumscribed passivity implied by the term 'response'. Moreover, the meaning of music as an experience of sound tends to be neglected: talk about such experience remains, implicitly, beyond this version of Media Studies. Nevertheless, occasional examples of efforts to enable to students to represent their experience of music, and the contexts of its consumption, can be found. Brian Dutton's *Media Studies - an introduction* (Dutton, 1989), for example, begins with three teenage diaries of week-day activities - all of which indicate the significant use of music on cassette or radio - and music recurs as an object of study at various later stages of the book. At one point, a suggested activity, linked to particular examples of visual iconography, advises students to:

> Choose one genre of pop music and describe:
> 1. Its distinctive musical sound, style and lyrics.
> 2. The typical singers/groups who produce the music.
> 3. Where and when the music is most often produced and consumed. (Dutton, 1989: p.101)

This minimal set of requests might be expected to produce problematic, and productive, encounters with the limits of both everyday and media educational discourses about music. But no discussion of how this might be supported or taken further is offered and, again, the detail of actual practice is thus left unexplored.

There are a number of other teaching resources which do also need to be mentioned here because they are likely to be identified with the approach to popular music from media education and may thus continue to contribute to the circumscription of its proper concerns. Such resources include, for example, *The Media Pack* (1987)[19], and a number of factual histories addressed to upper secondary school students. *The Media Pack* certainly devotes space to music but in a subordinate relation to a central concern with film and television, and with little attempt to provide constructive means to investigate current uses of popular music or much more than schematic accounts of the past.

A four volume set of amply illustrated booklets by Kay Rowley (Rowley, 1991) attempts something different: each volume (*Stars*, *Concerts*, *Videos*, *Cults*) takes a particular aspect of the popular music domain and, in a casual and mostly journalistic tone, provides unreflective histories laced with 'interesting facts' and 'extraordinary

statistics'. But it is their visual design, and the dominance of large colour images, which is most significant for, if these are school texts, they contrive to blur the distinction between popular and educational genres. Philip Hayward's *The Pop Music Business* (Hayward, 1988) is similarly dominated by visual material and is almost equally lacking in any of the analytical discourse which, in media education texts, would usually locate such material as itself a text to be debated. Hayward's verbal text is more 'sociological' and more inclined to engage in an implicit argument with unnamed opponents. Nevertheless, there is, in these materials a form of address which suggests a negotiation between teachers and their students, as if the offer of the unhindered pleasure of looking at the images is made in order to secure some attention to the verbal text. This hints at the underlying dilemma of 'teaching popular music', a dilemma which recurs throughout the 1970s and since: what can teachers do with material that is intensely pleasurable and antithetical to the regulated domain of school - where sexuality and sound are most rigorously policed?

To explore this, and other issues, it is necessary to place the developments outlined above in a broader context, acknowledging that other kinds of work on popular music have been proposed from a variety of vantage points, some less immediately concerned with media education in schools.

Indeed, it is significant that many of the more substantial attempts to develop work on popular music lie outside the central concerns of media education. As I have suggested, film studies on the one hand and ideological critique on the other have tended to define the field in terms which marginalized popular music. But more fundamentally, popular music may have been avoided by media education because music is so widely regarded as 'expressive' rather than 'communicational'. It is only more recently, and in the context of an intensified interest in audiences in media research, that the 'expressive' and 'affective' dimensions of subjectivity have become a more central concern for media education. In the larger context created by this shift of emphasis, music has become a more insistent object of attention.

Screen Education

To bring this review of past debates around popular music in media education to a conclusion, I want to review a small selection of articles from the journal *Screen Education*, of the Society for Education in Film and Television. In fact, *Screen Education* did not discuss popular music until after the mid 1970s when the growing influence of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, directed by Stuart Hall, clearly moved some within SEFT's milieu to reconsider the boundaries of their field. From Cultural Studies itself

there were significant, if infrequent, studies relating to popular music - though not often to teaching. Subsequently, in the 1980s, the Cultural Studies account of the field emerged through the Open University's Popular Culture course and its associated publications. Institutions more directly involved with secondary schooling, like the Clwyd Media Studies Unit[20] and the Cockpit[21] - which published *Schooling and Culture* - provided some occasional evidence of an interest in popular music.

Screen Education, through its forty-one issues and slightly more than twenty years of publication, had an uneven and uncertain relationship with media teaching in schools. Some contributions came from, and reported the detail of, classroom practice. Most did not. Very few of the articles representing popular music were also informed by practice in secondary schools. Nevertheless, important issues were addressed. An early reference was made to 'pop music' in issue Number 15 (Summer 1975):

> It is important that all those who want to contribute radical alternatives in education should appreciate how restrictive schools are in the knowledge they purvey and the demands they create...Whatever we teach, it is still a matter of **us** trying to persuade **them** to change their view of the world to conform with ours...
> ...
> A further problem emerges when, for instance, the teacher asks the kids to analyse and dissect the way pop music works, for this is threatening the sanctuary it provides in its aggression and alienation. The whole point about pop music is that it is against and outside all that school stands

> for; by bringing it into school and by asking the kids to subject **their** music to **our** analysis we destroy its most powerful asset. (Bethell, 1975: pp.19-20)[22]

Here, Andrew Bethell poses the dilemma facing teachers of popular culture in stark, polarised, terms. These were questioned, and developed, in subsequent issues of *Screen Education*[23]. By comparison with David Lusted's more recent perspective, cited in the *Introduction*, there is here a challenging assertion of difference between teachers and students. To some extent, what Lusted suggests is a degree of emergent commonality, but historically recent, and, therefore, unlikely to be apparent to teachers of Bethell's generation working in the immediate aftermath of the raising of the school leaving age to 16. However, the position taken by Bethell is also valuable in its attention to the form of institutional relationship produced between teachers and students in secondary schools with a substantial working-class intake. In invoking the case of pop music, he is acknowledging an especially sharp disjunction between 'analysis' and student identification which, as he implies, is too often evaded in the production of radical educational discourse. Others, Roy Stafford for example, suggest that the evasion is a necessary part of teaching about popular culture. Stafford presents an interesting case, constructed

around the famous incident in which the Sex Pistols (see Savage, 1991) swore on early evening television:

> The one point where teacher and student will agree is that in pop music, individual taste and feelings are often very important and that this is in some way connected to the music industry practice of labelling the product and the reinforcement of this labelling process by media institutions such as radio, TV and the press.
> ...
> The suggestion is to concentrate initially on the infrastructure of popular culture rather than on the product itself and in particular on one institution that supports the production of popular music, namely the music press.
> ...
> The music press has been introduced here, not especially for its intrinsic interest, but because it may provide a means of introducing the subject area of popular music without the initial problems of personal taste. (Stafford, 1977: pp.42-44)

Though this displays a pragmatic logic consistent with the demands of teaching, it is also a particularly clear instance of a recurrent pattern: the force of personal taste, of emotional and sexual meanings and of identification is acknowledged but this recognition is used to argue for a teaching strategy which explicitly avoids engaging with these aspects of popular cultural experience. The risk is that the object is thus always something other than what is central to the students' experience; teaching might thus become an evasion, at best a deferral.

Despite these reservations, with respect to Bethell and Stafford, it is only their contributions which represent

classroom practice outside higher education. *Screen Education's* other articles on pop music are important moves in debates about the cultural meaning of particular aspects of popular music but they are not concerned with specific encounters between teachers and students. A seminal article, 'Rock and Sexuality', by Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, and the response to it by Jenny Taylor and David Laing,[24] certainly registered influential assertions of the importance of popular music - 'rock music must be included in any comprehensive course of media studies' - but their priorities are to propose more theoretically developed explanations of the relationship between young people and the music they consume. Indeed, much the same intention can be attributed to two further articles, Angela McRobbie, 'Settling Accounts with Sub-Cultures' and Simon Frith, 'Music for Pleasure'.[25] As such, they (and the articles by Chambers discussed in the Introduction) certainly contributed to the emergent constitution of the field of popular music within both Cultural Studies and media education. Key aspects of their arguments are more appropriately addressed in Chapter 2, where I examine the concept of 'adolescence'.

2. Approaches through Music Education

In a parallel universe, rarely, if ever, intersecting with that of media education, other developments around popular music do seem to have taken shape. Several texts which come from within, or directly address, music education itself, offer interesting contrasts with the preoccupations most evident in media education and Cultural Studies. The various publications edited by Graham Vulliamy and Ed Lee and more recently, by Lucy Green, are essential to an examination of what media education might aspire to achieve in making popular music its concern. This is a substantial body of work but, again, my reading of these texts is framed by the question of what, in teaching upper secondary school students, within the field of media education, the priorities for teaching popular music should be. That question motivates my selection, and focus, in the following discussion.

Between 1976 and 1982, Graham Vulliamy and Ed Lee produced three collections in which teachers, mostly of music, described and proposed studies of popular music. Chambers cites their work[26] but, in the field of media education, there is otherwise no engagement with the developments they represent. I want to begin my discussion of their work, not with the books, but rather with an account, contributed by Graham Vulliamy,[27] to *Explorations in the Politics of School Knowledge* (Whitty and Young, 1976); it is in this essay that

the key elements of Vulliamy's case are most clearly presented. His concern is:

> ...to apply some of the insights of contemporary sociologists of education...A major focus of recent work in the sociology of education has been a critical consideration of the school curriculum and what counts as valid knowledge in educational institutions. (Whitty and Young, 1976: p.19)

In common with the intentions of what was called the 'new' sociology of education, exemplified in *Knowledge and Control* (Young, 1971), Vulliamy throws into question the orthodox separation and privileging of subject-based (school) knowledge relative to the everyday knowledge acquired by children in informal contexts. The case of music, polarised between what is 'serious' and what is 'pop', is presented as a particularly explicit instance and one where his critique might contribute to significant curricular change. By means of a brief detour through Wittgenstein, he sets out the argument for a curtailment of 'serious' music's claim to absolute aesthetic superiority:

> ...the assumption derived from the later philosophy of Wittgenstein that different 'language games' are associated with different public truth criteria is applicable...to issues of aesthetic judgements. It can thus be argued that different types of music necessitate different criteria for aesthetic judgement and the 'objectivity' of such judgements is relative to public truth criteria within that particular type of music...music would seem to be an area where change could take place as a result of a shift in the 'subject perspective' of music teachers. (Whitty and Young, 1976: p.29)

Though he sets out a variety of material constraints upon the change he advocates, he is otherwise committed to a rationalist argument which, as his essay progresses, becomes increasingly implausible. In his references to music teachers there is some credible expectation that:

> ...teachers ... committed to ... an ['open'] approach [might] increase as more young music teachers, who have been exposed in their adolescence to the rock music subculture, enter the profession. (Whitty and Young, 1976: p.30)

But, even in this, there is a lack of acknowledgement that, in the midst of change, elements of older identities remain entrenched or are recomposed around new divisions of taste and social affiliation. The problems become more obvious in his comments on students:

> ...many young people are extremely critical in their appreciation of various types of 'pop' music and approach the latter with clear sets of criteria concerning the relative worth both of various styles and of various records within one style. (Whitty and Young, 1976: p.31)

Of course, the argument is made to counter the mythology of mindless consumption of mass cultural products but the implicit equation of taste with 'clear sets of criteria', and the assumption that they are open to public negotiation, is a less than adequate formulation - in understanding both teachers and students. The limits of the sociological critique of the curriculum confine his approach to an

optimistic rationalism insufficiently attentive to the particular and complex formation of identities:

> The process of musical education should be concerned with expanding pupils' horizons ... encouraging all forms of musical expression without as far as possible holding preconceived ideas about which forms of music are intrinsically better or worse than others. (Whitty and Young, 1976: p.31)

But, as the experience of many teachers might confirm, even if they are striving to bracket their 'preconceived ideas', students are unlikely to make any comparable effort to 'suspend' their ideas, feelings and identities.

Pop Music in School, edited by Vulliamy and Lee, appeared first in 1976 and was revised in 1980. It thus coincides with the later years of *Screen Education* and with the writing and publication of, for example, *Teaching About Television*, by Len Masterman. As I have suggested, the priorities of media education were critical and conceptual, driven by the imperative of deconstructing the dominant ideology. Music education appears rather to have been concerned with performance and, where it did question the superiority of 'serious' music, with legitimating space for the performance of music derived from the popular domain. Given the prevailing separation of disciplinary fields, and these apparently divergent orientations, it is unsurprising that so few connections are made in the published texts. It is possible that examples of coordinated practice in schools did

exist but, as media education was more narrowly conceived as Media Studies during this period, this seems improbable; it is only in the more recent broadening of media education to encompass cross-curricular concerns that relationships between disciplines have been more seriously pursued (see Bowker, 1991: p.76). Forms of performance, if often metaphorically conceived, have had their place in both Media Studies and media education though, again, it is only in the more recent published accounts that they are given much attention. So, in the context of the later 1970s, the priorities represented by Vulliamy and Lee are not those to be found in media teaching. Nevertheless, there are also some significant parallels - a wish to address the cultural experience of young people, for example - and these will become apparent in my more detailed comments below.

The common intention to recognize and work with the cultural experience of students is, in music education, more intimately associated with concepts of child-centred teaching, whereas such notions were, in Media Studies, the object of some intense theoretical anxiety. If, in Media Studies, popular cultural experience was always compromised by the invasive contamination of dominant ideology, in music education no such doubts, and none of the 'neo-Marxist'[28] theory of ideology, appear to have secured a place. Vulliamy

and Lee's opening comments are illustrative of this difference in perspective:

> A general problem with pupil-centred learning is that teachers tend to fear a loss of control...the teacher might also argue that in this case the situation could be made even more difficult by his [sic][29] own ignorance, often exaggerated by rapid changes of fashion in pop...we feel that pop should not be taught in the traditional manner, in which the teacher is the master of a body of facts...the whole operation being directed by him. Instead the teacher should start by seeing his pupils as already possessing a considerable knowledge of pop music, which they are strongly motivated to expand. What he brings to the situation, which they do not have, is a body of ideas and concepts about music...the possibility of a real dialogue emerges, particularly if the teacher is willing to recognise the limitations of his own knowledge in this area...the pupils, in having to communicate with the teacher, could take a more active part in the educational process. (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976: p.2)

Though, in some respects, this kind of statement could be found in media education texts in the late 1970s, it lacks the anxiety about what young people might learn from 'pop' which, with a variety of political inflections, would enter virtually any account of media teaching. This is both an advantage and a weakness. The valuable aspects of their statement lie in the potentially productive sense of a relationship involving some fluidity in subject-positions: being a learner or a teacher become unfixed, negotiable, positions. However, their wish to validate popular music also excludes issues which media teaching would identify and question: for example, the form of gender relations within the field of popular music, almost entirely absent from their

studies, might well be given a central place. In this respect, their neglect of a broad array of ideological questions is further, symptomatic, evidence of their narrowly defined focus upon a single aspect of an aesthetic ideology in its curricular embodiment.

Vulliamy's essay, 'Pupil-centred music teaching', which overlaps with his contribution to *Explorations in the Politics of School Knowledge*, offers further evidence of an assumption that, if only the division of music between high and low culture can be overcome, then the conditions for a radical 'open' practice will follow. He suggests, following a discussion of Murdock and Phelps (1973):

> ...one might hope that a more open approach...would break down...barriers between classical and pop...but also *within* pop...The process of musical education should be concerned with expanding pupils' horizons and the best way to achieve this is by encouraging all forms of musical expression.. (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976: p.57)[30]

The implicit proposal that education can provide a kind of liberal public forum in which divisions might be eliminated by the rational pursuit of mutual knowledge bears some similarity to tendencies within multi-culturalism in the 1970s; and, just as the multicultural discourse became both more necessary, and less credible, so too does Vulliamy both repeat the need for hierarchical divisions to be eliminated and present evidence of how they might be reproduced. Indeed,

Vulliamy appears to favour 'rock' notions of authenticity (see Frith, 1983) but at the same time connects the use of such critical criteria with middle-class students - drawing upon evidence from Murdock and Phelps. He comments:

> In rock music...the originators of the material tend to account for the total product: not only do groups now write, orchestrate and play their own material, but in many cases they also produce their own records thus eliminating the possibility of outside control over the finished product. (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976: p.58)

In this respect, Vulliamy risks validating one particular set of criteria, thus colluding with a process he intends to challenge.

As a collection, the book is necessarily uneven, representing quite different school locations and different strategies in the placing of pop music in the curriculum. Some contributions are marked by a suspicion of popular music and, with a more explicit intention than Vulliamy, seek critical standpoints within an educational distancing from pop. In some respects, the polarity of mass culture :: authenticity is reasserted:

> ...the anti-social behaviour of teenage fans at soccer matches, and the conduct of some famous footballers...has no connection with the nature of the game itself, and certainly does not prevent it from being played in schools. There is a clear separation in the minds of physical education teachers between soccer as a social phenomenon and soccer as a game. We must, as music educators, also be aware of a similar separation between 'pop culture' and music making in 'pop' and related

> Afro-American styles such as the blues, as a valid musical recreation for young people. (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976: p.100)

This strategy of appropriation, claiming to abstract from the popular domain those forms which can be seemingly stripped of their cultural meaning and reconstructed on the terms which teachers dictate, is, though claiming to validate popular forms, authoritarian in its implications. In this scenario, the meanings young people give to pop, or to football, have no place; it is the teacher's attribution of meaning which, explicitly, determines the way in which popular music should be engaged. Elsewhere in the same essay, this 1970s Head of Music reintroduces the discourse of the defensive cultural minority, struggling to preserve authentic value, claiming that 'despite their outward conformity to pop culture, the creativity of teenage children remains intact' (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976: p.107). Indeed he concludes his contribution with a somewhat hopeful plea for the restoration of a folk creativity, conceiving schools as engaged in rivalry with, and in opposition to, the media:

> I am convinced that an increase of creative pop music making in schools where, given resources and encouragement, children will find that they are capable of producing more interesting pop music than is sold to them by the mass media, will lead to schools creating an alternative teenage musical culture based on *doing* rather than just listening. This could prove a formidable rival to the 'establishment pop' of the mass media. (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976: p.121)

Of course, the emphasis he places on activity is consistent with the imperatives of a discipline centred in performance but his account of the cultural place of school based musical production is seriously flawed, not least by the assumption that listening is merely passive. Moreover, students may produce their own music successfully but they are unlikely to do so in opposition to the domain of commercial popular music (see Fornas *et al*, 1995). Indeed, his stance seems unlikely to have convinced many students in his Hackney comprehensive school.

A further contribution is worth noting here. Again, it comes from a Head of Music committed to working with popular music in the mid-1970s. But here too, despite the positions to which Vulliamy and Lee, as editors, attempt to commit themselves, the construction of school music in opposition to media music emerges as a discursive limit beyond which the argument cannot progress.

> Since musical education for the over-fourteens was concerned mainly with a preparation for post-school leisure it was unrealistic to ignore the music they were listening to out of school and would continue listening to, or at least be bombarded with, after leaving. With the powerful influence of broadcasting media, popular music of all kinds has become a major part of our lives. It is difficult for teachers to touch pop music, not only because they are no longer musically young but also because of certain non-musical characteristics in pop, which are related to the adolescent's need for an independent identity. Also commercial exploitation has made pop - as it has other popular music - disreputable. Yet thanks to the dominance of

> younger musicians and to the continuing influence of Afro-American musical values, pop and rock music have tremendous vitality. The music teacher's job is to educate and to combat the limiting and desensitising aspects of the mass-media presentation of pop...it may be necessary to begin their musical education by starting from what their interest actually is. (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976: p.131-2)[31]

This delineation of a boundary between the 'popular-authentic' and the 'popular-media' constrains otherwise constructive efforts to rethink the relationship of school practice to students' cultural experience. Though not displaying quite the fear of a loss of control suggested by the analogy with football, here too the narrowing of music to a concern with active performance makes the social meanings of music extraneous, awkward impediments to a more proper attention to form and its enactment. In this way the social practice of listening, and all the complexity of practices of music consumption and use, become subordinate matters, if recognized at all. So, for example, one very vivid description of the way in which his department was favoured by working-class boys is left, frustratingly, undeveloped:

> ...the image projected by the music wing was keeping some pupils away...it seemed that you had to be on one side of a socio-cultural fence: youth culture/pop/hard boys from the estate, versus orchestral players/GCE candidates/smart girls from the suburbs. (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976: p.133)

In 1982, Vulliamy and Lee launched what was intended to be a series of eight books, written for use by school students,

and, in combination with their guide, intended to provide a substantial body of advice and reference for those working to reconstruct music education. It appears that this collection of 'text-books' was never published, with the exception of the initiating guide and overview addressed to music teachers.[32] Vulliamy and Lee, in *Popular Music - A Teacher's Guide*, make a wide array of proposals for the development of popular music in school. Particular aspects of their argument are worth noting in that they go beyond some of the more tentative comments in the earlier publication. Ed Lee, in *Pop Music in School*, suggests that 'class music must cease to be the major outlet for the teacher's effort' (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976: p.158) and, in the teacher's guide, they write:

> ...the popular audience is more concerned with dancing, social participation, and in some cases making music, than with attentive listening and analysis. The teacher who understands and attempts to implement these insights will find a need for some reassessment of his values and some readjustment of his professional role. (Vulliamy and Lee, 1982a: p.22)

They therefore propose that music become linked with dance through both dance based social events and through explorations of the variety of dance styles known to students. They also advocate the production of rock musicals, viewing pop related films, and developing project work around pop graphics. In these respects, their emphasis upon forms of

reception and upon the inter-related character of pop music and the media offer promising developments. Later chapters are more conventionally classroom focused and dwell in a variety of ways upon the need to support students in attempting to recognize, define and differentiate musical genres and their component features. Thus they suggest, for example, that:

> Pupils should be encouraged to articulate their own experience...the labels they use should not be despised, since they are often not merely fashionable jargon, but reflect demonstrable differences of rhythmic configuration and effect. Pupils should be asked to bring records to the class, and to try to identify the sources of the 'feel', thus enhancing both attentive listening and stylistic discrimination.(Vulliamy and Lee, 1982a: p.29-30)

Clearly this stress on 'attentive listening' is in some tension with their earlier comments on dancing but, as one among a variety of strategies, it is a helpful attempt to address a significant problem. Indeed, much of the rest of the book elaborates this strategy, always placing some emphasis on what students already know and conceiving the teacher's role as one of supporting its articulation, of encouraging reflection and of offering new perspectives (see Vulliamy and Lee, 1982a, p.67). Furthermore, the book also encourages student involvement in empirical investigations of youth cultures and, in combination with what the later volumes promised, there is no doubt that this represents an ambitious and comprehensive, but unrealized, project.

Nevertheless, some notable absences should be mentioned. Most obviously, there is no attention to questions of gender, nor was there any (intended) contribution by a woman to any book in the series. Beyond this, the weakness of the attempts to connect music with popular media leaves many issues to be identified: given that virtually everyone's knowledge and experience of music is substantially a matter of their access to, and use of, a growing variety of media technologies, many of them concentrated in domestic settings, it is essential that ways of reflecting upon that evolving experience be made available to students. It may be that the lack of attention here is, in part, a consequence of their masculine framing of issues - in their account, the domestic context does not figure. At best, it is a coincidental backdrop to listening. A further dimension of this lies in their strongly retrospective orientation: knowledge is very largely a matter of enquiring into the past, of particular kinds of music and of youth cultures. This is undoubtedly valuable, but it betrays a relative lack of concern with how the cultural position of music might be changing in the present, and what future developments might be identified in the most immediate shifts in current youth involvement with music. Here too, perhaps, the masculine preoccupations of youth culture studies tend to contribute to this enduring interest in reworking the past.

The last of the three books edited by Vulliamy and Lee, *Rock, Pop and Ethnic Music in School*, was also published in 1982. It is almost entirely devoted to essays which represent the use made of these categories of music in teaching performance. In this respect it is located more within the orthodox boundaries of music as a school subject than the teacher's guide, discussed above, suggests it should be. Nevertheless, there is one essay which offers some interesting examples of how work with popular music might, in one school, have moved into the field now known as media education. Paul Farmer, in 'Examining pop', reports on his own CSE Mode 3 course at Holland Park School. The syllabus (1977) included an historical dimension, some reading of music and listening to become familiar with a variety of styles. But, most closely related to media teachers' concerns, it also included work on the music industry:

> This covers the recording and manufacture of records, music broadcasting, pop journalism, the media and other related areas. Visits to radio stations and record company offices are organised, and visiting speakers from the industry are invited to talk to the pupils. Specific topics include: the development of recording equipment and techniques; the organisation and management of a performer; the marketing organisation of record companies; the disc jockey; 'bootlegging' and 'piracy'. (Vulliamy and Lee, 1982b: p.59).

The practical component of the examination also specified the submission of 'a short radio-type music programme, recorded, mixed and edited entirely by the pupils, who use their own

choice of records.' Farmer's account is brief, giving little more than an outline, but it is important that, at a time when media education was largely represented by Mode 3 CSE courses, some of the styles of work advocated in later Media Studies courses, particularly at GCSE level, had been begun, tentatively, elsewhere in the curriculum.

'Music on deaf ears'

I want to turn my attention now to the work of Lucy Green - *Music on deaf ears* (1988) - a study published early in the introduction of GCSE courses, replacing the division formerly represented by the dual CSE/GCE O level routes for students between 14 and 16. A part of her argument is concerned with the claims made for the GCSE, particularly as a means to 'overcome' the separation of classical and popular music and the social interests they represent. However, she is concerned with elaborating an historical and dialectical theory of musical meaning which has more general implications for the study of music. As with other authors whose practice lies in music education, the teaching and the achievement of performance skills is a significant concern for Green. Media education, though doubtless likely to benefit from the extension, and diversification, of such skills, cannot be seen as a primary site for the acquisition of musical

competence. Though I do want to consider the possibility that media production studies might involve a reworking of more traditionally conceived musical skills, it is not my priority to engage with music education where it is clearly centred in the teaching of performance. So, in my reading of Lucy Green it is, again, important to stress that I am concerned specifically with how her argument might inform, and challenge, the way in which media teachers, and students, engage with popular music.

In general terms, Green is concerned with the inscription of ideologies of music in educational practice. She retains the critical sense of ideology in Marxist theory - '...it explains things in a way that is to the advantage of certain social strata and the ill of others...' (Green, 1988: p.2) - and, in sketching her particular case, emphasises the features of ideology typically attributed to it in such theory:

> I aim to show that ideologies about music not only deny the historical specificity and changeability of music, musical beliefs and experiences, but that in so doing they implicitly construct a system for the measurement of musical value: the more capable of reification, the greater the music. (Green, 1988: p.11)

Within these terms, where the force of a dominant ideology is assumed and perhaps magnified, Green sets out her critique of musical aesthetic ideology as it is embodied both in the

documents which prescribe what should be taught and in the words of music teachers recorded in response to her (1983) survey. School students are invoked, convincingly, but they are not a substantial presence and their musical culture is left out of the account. Green's study is more an essay in aesthetic philosophy than a work of empirical social enquiry. Nevertheless, her theoretical perspective is one which does specify the place, and agency, of subjects and, if unevenly, struggles beyond the tendencies to an all encompassing pessimism rooted in the perception that ideology is both dominant and ubiquitous. In her opening chapter, for example, she argues that:

> ...musical sociology must construct its objects, in full recognition of the complexities of individual and social mediation. It must therefore consciously construct both the institutions in which individuals think and act, and the subjectivity of individuals themselves in connection with musical structure; it must negotiate with thinking and interpreting actors who have their own ideas and experiences, being confronted with various styles of music in different settings; but it must remember that the coexistence of all these spheres creates the phenomena that are its objects of study. (Green, 1988: p.10)

At the end of her study she is therefore able to write:

> ...pupils in classrooms are supposed to be learning about music as it is outside school, but the very situation itself can block and distort the nature of the musical object in a manner, the precise characteristics of which do not occur outside.

and,

> Schoolchildren, especially adolescents, search for music that celebrates them, with an ardour that exceeds their desire for educational success... (Green, 1988: p.143)

This orientation to institutional specificity, and the recognition of affective commitments to music, indicate scope for the kind of empirical research which I report in subsequent chapters (see Green, 1997). The continuing power of 'official' ideologies of music is not therefore denied or belittled but, in my account, it is the space which media education legitimates within the curriculum which may, at a distance from 'school music', enable the presence, and meaning, of musical tastes formed 'outside' to be declared. The terms which Green brings into play, in the intervening chapters of her book, do suggest essential heuristic strategies of importance for media teaching.

A key distinction for Green is that between 'inherent' and 'delineated' musical meaning. These terms seem immediately problematic in their duality and, particularly, in the apparent implication that meanings are located in the musical text itself, independent of audiences and their contexts of reception. 'Inherent' appears to suggest a level of formal meaning quite distinct from the social domain in which actual meanings are produced, interpreted and constantly reworked in a continuing process of 'social semiosis' (Hodge and Kress, 1988).

Yet Green's exposition addresses these issues and, as her argument unfolds, the value of the concepts becomes apparent, however compromised by the words she has chosen to use (for a further exposition and application of her theoretical vocabulary, see Green 1997). She makes the distinction between inherent and delineated meaning an analytic one between dimensions of musical experience which, in practice, are never separated:

> I wish to separate out...the way we hear music...and, for the moment, identify it as an abstract stage apart from ideological considerations. This is a purely formal move on my part...
>
> ...Music and consciousness connect, or *mediate*, with each other in some way as time passes, and this process is called temporal musical experience... (Green, 1988: p.12)

Through a brief discussion of Hegel's writing on music, Green pursues a formulation of the relation between the consciousness of the listener and the music:

> Musical processes are only understood as objects for consciousness as they pass, ceaselessly changing, through time...
> ...
> Hegel...enables us to acknowledge the fact that music lacks any subjectively understood objective structure *at any given instant;* and that music thereby causes the listener to structure each instant in terms of a wide *field of presence* related to past, present and future...contrary to Hegel's view of music listening as a state of subjective introspection free of the material world, musical experience is a process of continual self-negation and self-affirmation through

> reference to the pre-structured temporal flux of music as an alienated material object outside the self. The subject structures its intentions towards music according to what it knows of music. (Green, 1988: pp.15-16)

The importance of these observations is that they provide a preliminary outline of the phenomenon of music as a distinctive experience of sound and, while asserting the need to attend to music as a sound text, they also suggest something of the difficulty involved in giving verbal articulation to that experience. Indeed, Green appropriates Giddens' differentiation of the unconscious, practical consciousness and discursive consciousness, in her attempts to elaborate on this perspective: 'music is...an element of our...practical consciousness, a socially-constructed, shared body of retrievable non-discursive knowledge' (Green, 1988: p.20). But, looking back to her point of departure, with Hegel, the more fundamental question of how the 'subject' is conceived lingers awkwardly in her account - if the listening subject is always already a social subject, how helpful is it to adopt Hegel's highly abstracted 'subject' at all? Here, it is worth noting that 'inherent meaning' is only used by Green at the very end of the chapter in which she explains its meaning; the words seem to thus 'sum up' a complex theoretical strategy rather than carry their analytic meaning more explicitly.

Like the uneasy history of the concepts of denotation and connotation in visual semiotics, inherent and delineated meaning emerge as a pair to be always accompanied by their 'disclaimers'. Thus Green begins her next chapter with the reiterated warning that inherent meaning only refers to 'a formal, or logical, moment' which does not include 'the meaning of music as a historical object' (Green, 1988: p.26). It is here that her argument, and her examples, have a more substantial continuity with media education and with Cultural Studies and, in her terms, it is only delineated meanings which have been addressed in these fields. She suggests that:

> Images, associations, memories, queries, problems and beliefs inspired in us by music are musical meanings that...point outwards from music and towards its role as a social product...it..communicates its social relations as they are through history. Music delineates a profile of its position in the musical world amongst these social relations, and thereby also delineates ideas of social relations and social meanings to us: I will call these *delineated musical meanings*. (Green, 1988: p.28)

The whole field of social connotations, and of their institutional and cultural settings, is briefly sketched but the relationship of delineated to inherent meaning becomes crucial to the development of her argument. A key question here is that of the sense in which that relationship can be described as arbitrary. Green insists:

> *...we must have some knowledge of the style of a piece of music in order to experience inherent meanings as distinct from non-musically meaningful sound at all.* (Green, 1988: p.34)

In a reworking of Willis' ethnography of hippies and bike-boys (see Willis, 1978), she stresses the close inter-relation of inherent and delineated meanings:

> Aspects of [rock 'n' roll's] inherent meanings - its beat and forward impulse, its ability to be remembered, to get in the head, to accompany dance - are undistinguished from its delineated meanings - dancing as a sociable activity, motor-bikes, speed, machismo and aggression...
> ...The bike-boys liked the music not only for its inherent meanings, but also because what inheres in it carries further delineated meanings: dancing as a sociable activity, fast motor-bikes, machismo, leather jackets, camaraderie. These were shared social markers; they were associated with the music, itself a social marker, its inherent meanings having given rise to a set of learnt responses which, once learnt, were integrated with a set of activities in the social world. Hence with all the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, the music comes to delineate these activities...However, in the bike-boys' minds, the inherent and the delineated musical meanings were integral and inseparable, and in their activities, undistinguished. (Green, 1988: pp.40-41)

There is indeed a provisional validity in the distinction between inherent and delineated meaning in this description but it is compromised by some significant uncertainties: inherent meanings are, in one moment, seemingly pre-social, acquiring social meaning only when incorporated into the field of delineations and, further, the relation between these 'moments' is understood to be 'arbitrary', as if sets of empty musical signifiers have an existence somehow prior to the 'attachment' of, contingent, social signifieds. I doubt the value of describing this as 'arbitrariness'. The

'inherent meaning' of the music, rock 'n' roll, is already social - it is, like any other music, a socially produced form in which particular agents make, and have made, choices between possible formal alternatives. Its characteristic features are never therefore a neutral material onto which social meanings are imposed but are themselves meaningful elements in a particular socially located communication - rock 'n' roll produced for a specific social audience. Other kinds of music could not be substituted for rock 'n' roll and not just because they have the wrong delineated meanings - the qualities of the music are motivated (cf. Kress, 1993a).[33] Indeed, the social subjects involved in the production and reception of such music are not usefully understood through the Hegelian abstraction of consciousness from its social constitution: the mythical generality of the listening subject, stripped of social interests, does not pre-exist the acquisition of 'learnt responses'.

There are significant theoretical questions which need to be acknowledged here. Clearly, in what sense music might be understood as a social semiotic requires some comment. Green's stance is sometimes ambiguous for, despite her repeated reassertion of the social dimension, she also places music in an apparently distinct realm:

> ...unlike inherent meanings, which are logically purely musical and only communicable, therefore, as music, delineated meanings are capable of expression in spoken language. Try as we might, we

> cannot put an inherent meaning in any medium other than music, and even its description or explanation becomes, itself, a delineation. (Green, 1988: p.84)

This certainly seems an accurate comment on the relationship between verbal language and music but leaves the 'purely musical', the 'experience of music in time', implicitly less of a social matter. However, in her discussion of what she calls 'musical fetishism', a further crucial turn in her argument points more affirmatively to a social account of inherent meaning:

> The concept of musical fetishism relates directly to the ideological assumption that music is autonomous: because fetishism posits delineated meanings as the only ones that are communicable, it simultaneously posits inherent meanings as autonomous essences. We have access to the former but the latter, it appears, elude us. Whereas this is true in so far as we communicate *about* music in natural language, it is untrue in so far as we also communicate *through* music via musical inherent meanings. We are just as much the creators and reproducers of inherent meanings as we are of delineated meanings. Because it ignores this, ideology posits humanity as the slave of a music that has its own natural and unalterable laws, not as raw sonic material, but as pre-extant musical meanings. (Green, 1988: p.87)

Her argument is thus that an educational practice which does not make music heard will collude with, and reproduce, the ideological construction of music as a non-social medium. This is an important challenge for media education because, as I have suggested, it is, on the whole, delineated meanings

which preoccupy media teachers. The rationale for the title of her book is made clear when she comments:

> As soon as one attributes particular qualities to musically-aroused emotional states without further enquiry, the inherent meanings are posited as inexplicable essences. Once unquestioningly incorporated into an educational setting, the mode of study which is engendered by such an approach is one that therefore distances the inherent meanings of music from the act of learning: it is a sort of paramusicology, the study of music without the music. (Green, 1988: p.88)

As media teachers, and, often, also as English teachers, we might assume that verbal language is the pre-eminently social medium and that whatever cannot be translated into, and therefore 're-expressed', through its forms is beyond the semiotic domain (see Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996). To accept that there are other modes of communication which are distinct from, though sometimes combining with, the verbal is not easy in a 'logocentric' culture. Through the history of media education, a massive effort has been committed to the task of explaining visual material in verbal terms and, no doubt, the same challenge confronts a social semiotics of music. This verbal imperative is important but, as Green suggests, might compound the common attribution of a mysterious, non-human quality to music. Thus without by any means wishing to abandon the need for talk about music, it is essential to bring musical sound into a practice often constrained, by a combination of institutional regulation and

limited resources, to hesitate whenever listening to, or the production of, music becomes necessary.

The development of performance skills must still be mainly the responsibility of music education. Media education may enable students to be the producers of delineated musical meanings but the production of inherent musical meaning must remain somewhat beyond its boundaries. Nevertheless, there is a case for a much more extensive use of musical quotation and re-presentation in media education. The proliferation of the new technologies of musical production clearly opens up possibilities beyond the traditional concern with the achievement of instrumental skill. All the popular uses of such technologies, in hip hop culture (Gilroy, 1993) for example, suggest the futility of maintaining unduly rigid divisions between what counts as music and what belongs to 'Media Studies'. Forms of production in media education have become more central in recent years and there is every reason to support a sense of cultural agency, and of the sociality of musical meaning, through an exploration of precisely those practices which do not depend upon an elite social milieu. Of course, the detail of actual practices in media education, and related initiatives, need to be documented and their more contradictory implications acknowledged. It may be, for example, that successful practical production requires more intervention by teachers and more developed skills than the

wish to undercut elite conceptions of knowledge might allow (see Buckingham, Grahame and Sefton-Green 1995).[34]

Conclusion

The most important strands of published writing relating particularly to the teaching of popular music in secondary schools, in media and in music education, have been reviewed in this chapter. I have also made some tentative proposals for the priorities of teaching about popular music in media education.

In what follows, I move closer to classrooms, considering first of all the discursive constitution of 'adolescence' and its persistence in current forms of exchange between teachers and students. Of course, how young people engage with music outside of school was not beyond the bounds of my curiosity,[35] but it was beyond the bounds of my research. I engaged with the students in my research as a teacher and my concerns were framed by my interest in the character of that institutional encounter. As I have suggested, I never attempted to spend any time with young people in clubs or in record shops, nor did I ever seek to visit them at home. Sometimes (see Chapter 4; and also Appendices 1 and 2) there are *accounts* of activities in other places but, in this study, these accounts are taken as shaped by the school and classroom context and by the identity of their addressee - myself as a kind of

teacher - and it is this institutional framing of my data, in encounters between teacher and taught, which will be fundamental to the empirical chapters of this thesis.

Notes

1. I am concerned with both Media Studies and media education but take it that media education is now understood as the more inclusive term, with Media Studies standing as the specific title carried by some courses. Of course, the scope of this study is restricted to the British context.

2. However, see Murdock and Phelps (1973), discussed below.

3. Media teaching has a long history in further education but it is only recently that it has expanded vigorously under the title Media Studies.

4. See Richards, 1992.

5. As I was also a media teacher in the early 1980s I do not intend to exempt myself from these criticisms.

6. However, it is important to note that Murdock and Phelps (1973) make a clear, and well supported, case for media teaching and, particularly, for the central place of what they call the 'pop media'.

Their research was conducted on a large scale, using questionnaires and statistical techniques. Neither their implicit case for audience research, nor their specific advocacy of pop music appear to have been immediately persuasive to those involved in media education in the 1970s. Certainly their style of empirical sociology was not favoured at the time and remains relatively unpopular in Cultural Studies.

7. See Cubitt, 'Top of the Pops: the Politics of the Living Room', in Masterman, 1984.

8. There is some discussion of what Masterman calls the 'ideology of sound', pp. 153-6, but no discussion of music (Masterman, 1985).

9. See, for example, Cary Bazalgette's comments on primary media education.

10. Richard Dyer's comments appear in his essay 'Taking Popular Television Seriously', p.42 and Bob Ferguson's in 'Children's Television: The Germination of an Ideology', p.49.

11. See, for example, Richard Paterson, 'Planning the Family: The Art of the Television Schedule', *Screen Education* Number 35 Summer 1980, pp.79-85.

12. Alvarado *et al*, p.111.

13. The research methods adopted have been those of teachers' action research or 'reflective practice'.

14. Lusted, 1991. The majority of the contributors wrote their chapters in 1986. I assume that David Lusted's editorial introduction was written close to the year of publication.

15. See pages 1 and 57 and, with reference to the work of music departments in schools, page 76.

16. See also Cary Bazalgette, *Media Education*, (Hodder and Stoughton, 1991) which, though not particularly concerned with popular music, includes some discussion of, for example, Madonna - pp.10-18.

17. Murdock and Phelps remain close to Hall and Whannel, and indeed to Richard Hoggart, in their view of the 'discriminatory' responsibility of media teaching. Despite this, their concluding remarks on the implications of their research for media teaching are extremely helpful - see pp.140-150.

18. See, for example, 'Testimony of a Wham! Fan', p.247.

19. Kruger and Wall, 1987. I reviewed these materials for *Screen* Volume 32 number 4 Winter 1991, pp. 465-470.

20. See Points, 1985 - for example, Anne Pawling, 'Looking at Dance Craze Films'.

21. The Department of Cultural Studies at the Cockpit Arts Workshop. Dewdney and Lister (1988) includes an account of the Cockpit's activities and their journal, *Schooling and Culture*.

22. Bethell, 'Classroom Practice: Observations and Proposals'. The school in which Andrew Bethell taught at the time of the article occupied the site of the Hackney school used in my own research.

23. See Lovell, '"The Searchers" and the Pleasure Principle', *Screen Education* 17, Winter 1975/76; Alvarado, 'Class, Culture and the Education System', and Stafford, 'Popular Culture in the Classroom', both in *Screen Education* 22, Spring 1977.

24. Frith and McRobbie, 'Rock and Sexuality', *Screen Education* Number 29 Winter 1978/79; Taylor and Laing,

'Disco-Pleasure-Discourse: On "Rock and Sexuality"', *Screen Education* Number 31 Summer 1979.

25. McRobbie, 'Settling Accounts with Subcultures'; Simon Frith, 'Music for Pleasure' - both in *Screen Education* Number 34 Spring 1980.

26. In his *Screen Education* article, 'Pop Music: A Teaching Perspective' (Summer 1981).

27. Graham Vulliamy, 'What counts as school music?', in Whitty and Young, 1976.

28. I am thinking here mainly of Althusser. Marxist theories of ideology do not seem to be considered within music education until much later - see Green, 1988.

29. All of the Vulliamy and Lee texts are remarkably immune to feminist critiques of language use: teachers and pupils are always male and so are all the various contributors to the three books.

30. Ed Lee, Vulliamy's co-editor, offers a contrasting perspective in his essay, 'Pop and the teacher: some uses and problems':

'Because pop is so linked with the need for identification with a social group, adolescents especially may well resent what they see as an attempt by the teacher to get under their guard. Alternatively they are often willing to have pop music played...But they are then likely to remain obstinately silent when asked to discuss what they have heard.' (pp.158-159).

31. Malcolm Nicholls, 'Running an 'open' music department'.

32. Vulliamy and Lee, 1982. It is worth noting, however, that Hebdige (1987) includes what must have been his intended contribution to the series:

'...the "Original Cut" was written in 1979. It was meant to be published as it stands. The book consisted of a general introduction to Caribbean music together with some history of the passage of black people from Africa via the West Indies to Great Britain. The main focus was on the origins and development of reggae music. In its original form and with its original title, *Rebel Sound: Reggae and Other Caribbean Music*, it was designed to stand on its own as one of a series of books on popular music aimed at young people at different ages and at various levels, doing courses in schools on

general studies, communications, black studies, popular music or popular culture. I still hope the book will make sense in this context.' (p.15).

33. See, with reference to texts of a different kind, Kress, 'Against arbitrariness: the social production of the sign as a foundational issue in critical discourse analysis', in *Discourse and Society* vol. 4(2) (Sage, 1993) pp.169-191. Kress argues, for example:

'...signs are always motivated...by the producer's interest, and by characteristics of the object. It is 'interest' which determines the characteristics that are to be selected and to be represented. The relation of signifier to signified, in all human semiotic systems, is always motivated, and is never arbitrary.' (p.173)

and,

'The notion of sign which I am putting forward makes it possible to connect the specificities of semiotic forms, in any medium, with the specificities of social organizations and social histories, via the actions of social individuals in the production of signs. It permits the move from the actions of individuals as social agents, with their interests, to the actions of the group of which individuals are members, with that group's interest, in the fullest sense.' (p.177).

34. See especially Chapter 4 'Hangin' with the Technology: A Critical Investigation of Group Production'. For example, Buckingham comments, in reviewing a video production course within a youth and community project:

'...it is important to avoid an easy optimism here. While the industries are undeniably changing and fragmenting, not least with the impact of new technologies, the chances for relatively 'unskilled' young people to find employment there remain minimal. There is a yawning gap between the work that may be done on these kinds of courses and the 'real' world of the media industries. Any pretence that they might be offering vocational training would seem to be more than a little dishonest.' (Buckingham, Grahame and Sefton-Green, 1995: p.102)

35. See the work of John Shepherd and Jennifer Giles-Davis, 'Music, Text and Subjectivity', (Shepherd, 1991) for an interesting, and challenging, precedent.

Chapter 2: Questions of Agency and Adolescence

Introduction

Studies of 'adolescence' and of 'youth' are so numerous (see Griffin, 1993) that, rather than attempt to review even a substantial sub-category, I intend this chapter to fulfil a different purpose. I want to explain what kind of accounts of 'youth' inform my reading of the data discussed in the main empirical chapters of the thesis. In the thesis as a whole my concern is both with the difficulty of studying popular music in school and with how it might be of consequence for those media education seeks to address: a 'constituency' which has been defined, predominantly, as adolescent. Given such a 'constituency', it is necessary to devote this chapter to a review, however partial, of the meanings attributed to 'adolescence' and 'youth'.

An important argument both for the constitution of 'youth' as a category, and for its subdivision into 'childhood' and 'adolescence', is that physical development determines a whole array of social and psychological characteristics of young people. It would be difficult to disagree that physical size and sexual development are both relevant to the differentiation of young people from adults and of children from 'teenagers'. It would be absurd to deny that between 'infancy' and 'maturity' major biological changes take place and that, even within the narrower focus of my concerns,

physical differences are significant. However, the meanings attributed to changes in size, in body shape and in sexual development, are socially produced and, for young people themselves, their own understanding of such changes is not an expression of the 'biological' but is, rather, an appropriation of a complex array of socially available discourses - those of popular biology and psychology, of law and of education, but also those of the various cultural media (cf. Connell, 1995). My particular area of concern is, therefore, that of the cultural-discursive material through which, within a particular historical location, childhood and youth are constituted and demarcated.

Though the organization of families, economic and legal structures, and the institutional 'sequestration' of young people, are powerful determinants of their lives, I want to dwell mainly upon the meaning of 'adolescence' as a subjective phenomenon. The relationship between social practices and subjectivity is a complex matter but I want to emphasise that one crucial dimension of that relationship is shaped by the continuing discursive construction of social actors. For example, the categories of 'adolescent' and 'adult' have radically different implications for the actions of people assigned to each category and, perhaps most importantly, different degrees, even different kinds, of agency are attributed to each. To speak of 'adolescents' is

to imply an agency construed as less rational, certainly more emotional and more erratic, than that of adults; such pre-adult agency is not therefore 'safe', unless contained by social identities which project a continuity with 'respectable' adulthood. Identities more strictly circumscribed by the complex requirements of a middle class education are likely to be linked, by adults, with concepts of maturity and responsibility.

Nevertheless, I want to use the concept of 'adolescence' because it does imply a concern with subjectivity and is perhaps less skewed towards boys alone than the more sociological 'youth'. Furthermore, it suggests a process of transition, of 'becoming', hinting at adult agency, without blurring into the wider construction of 'youth' as people in their twenties. Still, it remains a highly problematic concept. 'Adolescence', in current use, is widely distributed across popular discourse, though still deriving some of its aura of technical authority from psychology. It is commonly used to label and explain, in an elliptical and routine way, the combination of sexual maturation (often represented in terms of 'raging hormones') with the confusion of being 'in-between' childhood and adulthood. It is thus, crucially, understood to be an inevitable and unavoidable 'stage' or 'phase' through which all must pass, if with varying degrees of torment and distress. However, the delineation of such a

phase, and its construction as a natural and inescapable feature of individual development, tends to reflect and confirm the institutional authority of a psychological problematic. There is, it seems, a familiar circularity: psychology recognizes 'adolescence', 'adolescence' is a problem which psychology can explain.

A historical perspective

Though my own engagement with the issue of 'youth-in-transition' draws upon some sociological arguments and aspects of discourse analysis, I want to begin with a reading of an historical account - *Youth and History* (Gillis, 1981). Gillis, writing in the aftermath of 1968, produced a history of youth which, though limited by its masculine focus, suggests a view of 'adolescence' as an historically circumscribed feature of economic and familial organization. In an initial review of youth in pre-industrial Europe, Gillis brings into play a contrast between what he characterizes as 'our' assumptions and the discernible pattern of pre-modern life:

> In our time, the adolescent is distinguished from older youth primarily by the fact that he or she is coresident with his or her own family. When a young person leaves home, he or she ceases to be looked upon as an adolescent and enters into the category of 'youth'. Preindustrial society made no such distinction, precisely because children were sent to live in other households as early as 7 or 8 years. There they lived and worked as servants...(Gillis, 1981: p.7).

This suggests the extent to which the distinctiveness of 'adolescence' is, as indeed his argument subsequently contends, an outcome of relatively long term processes involving reductions in child mortality, in the size of families and in the relation of families to work and to education. Against the view that 'adolescence' is a natural developmental phase - a perspective which he attributes to the universalizing discourses of medicine and psychology - he argues that, in the pre-industrial context 'children were accustomed to assuming adult sex roles very early and the attainment of puberty was not signified by change in dress or by other external manifestations of maturity' (Gillis, 1981: p.6).

In Gillis' argument, the widely acknowledged acceleration of physical maturity in this century becomes one among a number of determinants in the dissolution of 'adolescence' as a distinct, clearly bounded, phase. Thus, rather than suggesting that 'adolescence' begins earlier, no simple relation of cause and effect between 'puberty' and 'adolescence' is proposed. To the contrary, the emphasis falls upon the sets of social and economic relationships within which 'sexual maturity' might be understood in different ways and given varying degrees of importance.

The achievement of the social preconditions of 'adolescence' is represented in Gillis' account as, first of all, peculiar to the middle-classes of western Europe. During the later decades of the nineteenth century, 'low mortality and low fertility made adolescence possible' but, he continues, 'the real crucible of the age-group's social and psychological qualities was the elite secondary school' (Gillis, 1981: p.105). The extension of schooling and the deferral of young people's entry into more adult domains are seen as fundamental to the formation of the new 'adolescent' age phase, between 14 and 18. The emphasis, in this middle-class construction, was upon the 'conformity, self-denial, and dependence' required of children in whom time, money and the expectation of continuing respectability and class privilege were invested. These demands became:

> ...positivistic standards of human behavior by which an upper class could assure itself of its inherent superiority to the lower orders. The fact that children of the working class were independent and resistant to institutional controls was now proof of their inferiority. (Gillis, 1981: p.115).

This sketch of the origins of a discourse - for that is how I am appropriating a study which is neither primarily concerned with discursive analysis nor with the experience of school students in the present - provides one way of critically disengaging my own analysis from a complicity with the still prevalent discourse of 'adolescence'.

Indeed, the importance of this historical perspective lies in its location of what became an apparently neutral scientific discourse in the complexly interweaving strategies of class interest and familial aspiration (Gillis, 1981: p.114). Thus, in a key chapter - 'Conformity and Delinquency: The Era of Adolescence, 1900-1950' - he outlines a period in which:

> ...the images of the innocent adolescent and the predatory delinquent have formed an historical dialectic for most of this century...both were largely projections of the hopes and fears of a middle strata of European society struggling to hold its own against successive waves of social and political change. (Gillis, 1981: p.182).

One aspect of the dynamic through which the idea of 'adolescence' became widely endorsed, though again not specified in terms of a detailed discursive history, is of particular significance for the formation of teachers and of their understanding of what purposes their work with young people might serve. The new lower middle class, striving to achieve and sustain the respectability of the more established and secure middle class, adopted education as one of the means to distinguish their own children, and their futures, from delinquency. Gillis argues that:

> ...the new white-collar class came into existence at precisely the time that the new social attitudes toward youth were being generated...Discipline, deferred gratification, and conformity were the keys to their success in the difficult years of inflation during the 1920s, in the Depression, and again during the period of austerity after the Second World War. Their anxiety to attain and hold the respectability generally accorded a middle-class person came to be institutionalized in the schools and youth organizations through two

> different channels. The first were the school teachers and youth workers themselves, many lower-middle class in origins and eager to serve bourgeois norms as a way of certifying their own status. The other way was through the parents, who were willing to fit their sons and daughters to the social and psychological demands of adolescence in order to guarantee them a step up the ladder of success. (Gillis, 1981: p.169).

Here, 'adolescence' emerges as a social mechanism through which children, maintained as subjects to whom teachers, parents and youth workers have access, might pass into the settled and regulated life of adult respectability; lacking such access, 'adolescents' would be 'at risk', subject to their own unguided agency. Gillis, writing at the beginning of the 1970s, saw the power of this mechanism as radically undermined by the political events of the 1960s - to such an extent that he regarded 'adolescence' as at an end:

> The renewal of political activism and social commitment during the 1960s seemed to terminate abruptly the long era of adolescence...The revival of student radicalism and bohemianism, together with an apparent increase in various kinds of sexual experimentation, seemed, in fact, to reverse the trend of the previous 50 years and to restore something of the social and political independence of youth that had been a feature of the nineteenth century. (Gillis, 1981: pp.185-6).

Of course, the period was one in which the public agency of youth was visibly demonstrated in a great variety of contexts but both then, and since, there seems little evidence that the discourse of 'adolescence', and its regulatory function, in various institutional practices (including education) has been successfully challenged. Gillis' own (1981) Postscript

implies some need to revise his own earlier conclusions. There is clearly a case for emphasising the continuing effectivity of the discourse of 'adolescence' and the sense in which young people themselves take up positions as 'adolescent' and, in part, constitute themselves as subjects within its terms. Moreover, some of Gillis' comments on the nature of child-adult transitions in the recent past (the 1960s) seem surprisingly 'rationalist' in their diminution of the difficulty and contradiction of youth experience: the assumption seems to be that the appearance of a new discursive configuration, one in which a politicized conception of youth is more central than a concept of 'adolescence', is sufficient evidence that subjects can entirely remake themselves in these new terms:

> By 15 or 16, middle-class youths have developed a psychological stability that was rare in earlier generations of this strata. Having put personal tasks of development behind them by the time they reach later stages of secondary education or the first years of university, they are able to cope with social and political questions that their forerunners gladly left to adult authority. (Gillis, 1981: p.207).

Here, the level at which his historical analysis is conducted becomes less than adequate to the work of understanding the formation and complexity of subjectivity. The implicit model of stages, in each of which particular kinds of developmental 'tasks' are completed before moving on, ignores the sense in which subjects retain elements of their own pasts rather than passing through a series of neat transitions in which the

final traces of earlier subjective formations are eliminated (see Cohen, 1986; 1997).[1] Furthermore, there is a risk in this that the analysis colludes with the way in which subjects account for themselves, simply confirming their conscious self-representation and foregoing the need to raise questions around dimensions of their formation of which they may be less aware.

In a discussion of the concept of 'generations', Karl Mannheim argues that those phenomena of which a generation can be aware are not necessarily those which most fundamentally shape the conditions of their existence:

> The possibility of really questioning and reflecting on things only emerges at the point where personal experimentation with life begins...That level of data and attitudes which social change has rendered problematical, and which therefore requires reflection, has now been reached...Combative juvenile groups struggle to clarify these issues, but never realise that, however radical they are, they are merely out to transform the uppermost stratum of consciousness which is open to conscious reflection. (Mannheim, in Jenks, 1982: p.268).

Of course, this can be construed as conservative, and paternalistic, in its implications. However, it does embrace several significant issues: that the early formation of subjects is indeed exceedingly difficult to recover and rework, that the vantage point of a generational group is inevitably limited by historical contingencies and that the knowledge which might inform radical change is therefore

always limited and somewhat piecemeal. The middle class 'adolescent' subjects of the 1960s are represented as improbably self-aware in Gillis' account. To the contrary, and in acknowledgement of psychoanalytic arguments, I want to emphasise that subjectivity is always multiply (over) determined and that particular subjects are situated in disparate and partial fields of knowledge in relation to those determinants - that what people can 'know' of themselves is always limited and uneven, never 'complete'.

Academic discourse: representing youth

The argument that subjectivity is situated and partial also applies to academics, professionally interested in producing accounts of others' lives. They, like the young people about whom they write, are themselves overdetermined subjects producing knowledge within the particular, determinate, conditions of the academic domain. In *Representations of Youth* (1993), Christine Griffin turns her attention to the representation of youth in academic discourses, if not quite to the particular academics employed in the production of such discourse. She provides a history of discourses about youth which usefully complements the more economic and demographic arguments proposed by Gillis. Indeed, her analysis, though emphatically discursive, is in some respects a development of the position taken by Gillis:

> ...contemporary youth research can be read in part as a reflection of hegemonic 'common sense' about 'youth' and 'adolescence': or all those meanings

> and values which academic researchers have tended to take for granted. This involves the construction of the age stage of 'youth' or 'adolescence' itself and distinctions between 'normal' and 'deviant' forms of adolescent behaviour... (Griffin, 1993: p.6).

Sceptical of equations between puberty and 'adolescence', she too pursues an argument which seeks to favour those discourses in which 'adolescence' is rendered a more social than biological phenomenon. Gillis sought both to disengage 'puberty' from 'adolescence' and to represent the biological (the onset of puberty and the menarche) as itself, in part, socially and historically determined. Griffin, writing twenty years later, is more urgently preoccupied with the power of New Right ideologies to connect with common sense:

> Youth becomes a unitary category which is distinct from and preliminary to adulthood and maturity. It seems impossible to imagine a society in which the phenomenon of adolescence does not exist. After all, we were all young once, so surely this *must* be a natural and universal phenomenon? (Griffin, 1993: p.11).

Griffin's approach is to review a wide variety of arguments around these issues - from G. Stanley Hall through to recent lesbian feminist critiques - and to raise questions of validity and coherence; the basis of her own position remains provisional, though she is clearly committed to a refusal of the closed and essentialist arguments of the right. In part, her uncertainties arise from her reflection that, as another adult academic, she too participates in the process of

representation she seeks to criticize. She comments, for example:

> Youth/adolescence remains a powerful cultural and ideological category through which adult society constructs a specific age stage as simultaneously strange and familiar. Youth/adolescence remains the focus of adult fears and pity, of voyeurism and longing. (Griffin, 1993: p.23).
>
> There is no sharp and irrevocable separation between young people's experiences and ideologies about 'youth', but there is a sense in which adult academics (including myself) can never 'know' what it meant to be young in the 1980s. This has not prevented us from speaking for and about young people in a massive and growing research literature...(Griffin, 1993: p.26).

Though her recognition of the limits and perversity of adult knowledge of youth is clear justification for turning her attention to the terms in which those knowledges are constructed, there is also a curious disavowal involved - for just as 'we' cannot know 'what it meant to be young in the 1980s' neither can 'they' know what 'being young' in, say, 1968 'meant'. More importantly, her disavowal appears to involve an elimination of her own youth from her position as a researching subject - she represents herself as if she could be an 'adult unitary subject' - as if her present institutional position could neatly contain and circumscribe her subjectivity. Here, a limitation of too exclusive a dependence upon discourse analysis becomes apparent: subjectivity is sometimes reduced to positions in discourses conceived synchronically - as if the complexity and persistence of subject positions taken up through time can be

simply bracketed out. However, beyond this denial of individual subjects' histories, there is a case for arguing that 'we' as adult subjects are not simply beyond youth but carry the traces and consequences of our own location as 'youth/adolescent' at another time and, in doing research on 'youth', might constructively recall such moments in our own formation (see Hollway, 1994).

For myself, there is every reason to admit some continuity between the production of the present text and the coincidence of my own 'youth/adolescence' with schooling in an institution concerned to inculcate traditional middle class culture and to emulate the regimes of masculinity associated with the elite 'public schools'. At 15 and 16, in 1967 and 1968, I was both in school (doing GCE 'O' Levels) and out of it, locating myself in a cultural space mapped out through American 'beat' writing, much of it dating from the 1950s, and the more immediate attractions of West Coast 'counter-culture'. I took off, whenever I could, to try out another kind of identity - if in effect to thus return with another kind of subcultural, and sexual, capital to set against that of my ex-best friend, then into being a mod, sex and scooters, fighting and The Small Faces. Hitching down to London alone in the Spring of 1968, I began a series of ventures into other people's lives: accumulating 'experiences' with cannabis, with (mis) calculated sex, all

'enhanced' in value by their metropolitan setting. The day I finished my O Levels, I took a Chemistry practical exam in Beverley in the morning, and took LSD just off Kensington High Street, in London, in the afternoon. My illicit absences led me to a threat of expulsion. To define myself through this cultural other scene fulfilled, if with considerable damage, several purposes. At the very least it set me up, like those in the third of Frith's case-studies, as 'aggressively hip' in the context of school and as more of an enigma, and maybe a challenge, to my mod (formerly childhood) friend. But somehow, and unlike my friend who did get expelled, I retrieved myself into the expected educational narrative and, high on high literature, did the Sixth Form.

The tension between the cultural order of the school and the construction of a self-identity located in another, if equally masculine, cultural scene does persist in the negotiated compromises that have shaped my 'adult' preoccupations. Mannheim remarks that young people are 'dramatically aware of a process of de-stabilization and take sides in it' and that, meanwhile, 'the older generation cling to the re-orientation that had been the drama of *their* youth' (Mannheim, in Jenks, 1982: p.268). This can be construed as critical of the self-bounded concerns of 'the older generation' but it also points to that persistence of past identities which, I want to argue, rather than impeding youth

research, actually facilitates recognition of what, as adults, we may not otherwise allow much conscious time. Specifically, in my research, it motivates that wish to produce a curriculum of some value to those upon whom it is imposed, or to whom it might be offered.

Griffin, critical of the adult construction of debates around youth, makes a case for the recognition of young people as themselves subjects entitled to speak somewhat more on their own behalf. But, whatever they might say, their words remain those of a subordinate category of person, subject to all the doubts and (dis)qualifications which inhere in both the popular and academic mythologies of 'adolescence'. Again, then, I want to argue that in any dialogue between ourselves as adults and young people, there should be some effort to reflectively 'deconstruct' our own vantage point. Through such a (dis)location of the supposedly mature, unitary, adult subject, we might thus avoid confining young people, as objects of research, to 'adolescence' alone.

Agency...

Leaving aside this question of how adults might relate to, and represent, young people - about which more will be said in the next chapter - I want now to give some further consideration to the question of agency. In what sense are

young people, resident with parental figures, double-positioned as children and as 'growing up', the agents of their own self-identity? Such 'double-positioning' (see James, 1993: p.106) precedes 'adolescence' but becomes more intensely contradictory in its demands during the later years of compulsory schooling. Responsibility for the self becomes a more insistent theme in those educational discourses which address secondary school students and, to some extent, 'agency' is itself a construction which offers, and compels, the assumption of adult status. One perspective on this is celebratory: if such 'agency' is expected of those still legally resident with their families (or guardians), then the forms of that agency far exceed the narrow terms of normative responsibility which schools may prescribe. To some extent, this is an argument I acknowledge but, it would be simplistic idealism to retain, without qualification, the phrase I used above - 'agents of their own self-identity'. This is one theme in particular popular discourses around 'youth' but it coexists with, and is easily overwhelmed by, those mechanisms through which, in particular social and material conditions, young people are 'charged with' being more responsible for themselves. Furthermore, as I have argued, the terms of their own self-understanding are uneven, limited by access to the field of possible discourses and by emotional dynamics of which they, *and we*, can only struggle to be aware. Thus, though the recognition of the cultural agency of children and

young people is a desirable counter-point to their portrayal as passive victims (see Griffin, 1993: pp.140-1), it is not credible to attribute to 'them' a capacity for autonomous self-construction which 'we', as adults, might feel we have lost and wish, by means of displaced fantasies about 'the young', we could recover.

... and discourse

I want to turn now to offer a brief outline of an approach to agency through 'discourse'. Discourse, and the discursive emphasis of my analysis, allows attention to language within its historically circumscribed uses. While making language a crucial dimension of subjectivity, the term discourse marks out a more fluid and variable encounter with language than that associated with accounts of language which stress its structural order, its stability and its duration across long phases of history (see the critique of Saussure in Volosinov, 1973, and Bakhtin's further elaborations, 1988; 1994). Saussurean accounts cannot adequately grasp the transformative agency of speakers. Discourse, however, is a socially located use of language, never reducible, at the level of meaning, to the generality of the 'official' language. Discourses may be very strongly bounded and institutionally regulated but, equally, they may be much less sharply defined, varying in their degrees of differentiation from other discourses, sometimes, perhaps, seeming to

coalesce. For example, a discourse such as that of 'official' medicine is of the first kind and those of 'folk', 'proverbial' and 'alternative' medicine might be of the latter. Within discourses, particular 'subject-positions' are 'in play': thus, most distinctively, doctor and patient. Particular kinds of social relation are also inscribed within discourses and the subject-positions they sustain. To refuse to speak 'as a patient', to a doctor, is, if nothing else, a discursive aberration. However, there is evidently considerable scope for any person positioned as 'a patient' to both maintain something of the mutually understood 'discursive relation' while simultaneously elaborating, reworking and perhaps contesting that given subject-position.[2]

Tentatively, it is useful to think of being 'an adolescent' in some of the ways that it is possible to think of being 'a patient'. I want to argue, in effect, that just as people are only sometimes, and in widely varying circumstances, 'patients', so it is useful to say that people are, sometimes, 'adolescents'. To be more precise: I want to argue, not that the students discussed in this thesis are 'adolescents', but that being an 'adolescent' is one of the available self-identifications which they can adopt, contest, and elaborate. This is not to deny the power of subordination associated with the discourses in which 'adolescence' has

been produced. The point is, rather, that there is considerable scope in the use of 'adolescence' for its appropriation in the construction of self-understanding across a much longer time-span than the very few years, technically and prescriptively, associated with physical/sexual maturation. Children, in various circumstances, use being 'a child' as a strategy in their negotiation of those social relations within which adopting such a subject-position may confer some advantage; equally, they may seek to refute the ascription of such a subject-position when, and where, it is a hindrance or involves conceding the power of others. Similarly, being 'an adolescent' or 'a teenager', can be both a strategy in negotiating relations with others and a provisional mode of self-identification and, perhaps, self-understanding. To some extent, then, it is helpful to say that people produce themselves as 'young', as 'children', as 'teenagers' and do have some degree of agency in their construction of self-identity at the level of their own inscription into different available discourses, and in their remaking of those discourses. But, also, as for 'patients', there is sometimes very little choice at all. In some circumstances, the constraints of the position to which people are assigned may be too intractable, and involve too many compromises, to be tolerated; in schools, for example, being positioned as a 'pupil' and a non-adult can sometimes be weirdly and

impossibly inconsistent with the broader array of 'positions' available elsewhere.

The relation of discourse to subjectivity requires some further discussion; the formulation of subject-positions in discourses cannot, after all, exhaust what is constitutive of subjectivity. It may be that some discursive acts are highly self-conscious and others routine, barely available as objects of conscious reflection until, and unless, the need arises. Giddens has proposed a distinction which seems close to that implied here (Giddens, 1979; Giddens, 1991) - he argues, for example, that:

> ...the accounts that actors are able to offer of their conduct draw upon the same stocks of knowledge as are drawn upon in the very production and reproduction of their action. As Harre expresses this, 'the very same social knowledge and skill is involved in the genesis of action and accounts...an individual's ability to do each depends upon his stock of social knowledge'. But we must make an important emendation to the point of view Harre appears to take. The 'giving of accounts' refers to the *discursive* capabilities and inclinations of actors, and does not exhaust the connections between 'stocks of knowledge' and action. The factor missing from Harre's characterisation is practical consciousness: tacit knowledge that is skilfully applied in the enactment of courses of conduct, but which the actor is not able to formulate discursively. (Giddens, 1979: p.57).

One aspect of 'conduct' is, of course, the production of discursive acts - to speak is an action entailing the production of discourse. Thus, though this is not Giddens'

central point, to some extent discursive acts are themselves dependent upon 'tacit knowledge' which the actor may not be able to reflect upon discursively. If, for example, young people speak as 'adolescents' this might combine, in some moments, both a self-reflexive consciousness of such 'positioning' and a 'tacit' understanding of how to produce discourse from such a position. As Giddens argues, this should not be collapsed into the category of the unconscious. Indeed, even when the possibility of self-reflexive consciousness is not realized by an actor, there is no need to explain their actions as 'unconscious'. Giddens' argument here is this:

> The reflexive monitoring of action draws upon 'tacit knowledge' which, however, can only partially and imperfectly be expressed in discourse. Such knowledge, which is above all practical and contextual in character, is not unconscious in any of the senses in which that term is usually employed in the structuralist literature. (Giddens, 1979: p.40)

The 'contextual' use of tacit knowledge, in Giddens' terms, includes 'the monitoring of *the setting of interaction*, and not just the behaviour of the particular actors taken separately' (Giddens, 1979: p.57). In relation to my concerns, this may help to clarify the sense in which young people in secondary schools, located there as 'adolescents', consistently take account of such an institutional setting and produce actions which constantly reproduce, but also re-inflect, the form and meaning of the positions they are

called upon to occupy. Their agency is not therefore a matter of entirely self-conscious, knowing, tactics, nor is it to be sought in moments which appear to transcend the institutional setting. However, agency can be identified in the capacity to draw upon a multiple, and often diverse, repertoire of cultural knowledge in ways which enable actors to interpret, and to project action beyond, the positions to which they are assigned. Thus the codified formality, regulated conduct and appropriate speech which schools attempt to sustain is, if powerful, also a somewhat 'official' fiction.[3]

A further perspective, of relevance here, is that offered by Bourdieu, in his essays on language (1992). I have already made some use of terms given prominence in his work - cultural capital, for example. Here I want to introduce, more explicitly, further aspects of Bourdieu's 'market' metaphors by referring to his essay on 'Price Formation and the Anticipation of Profits' (Bourdieu, 1992). The market metaphor usefully stresses *anticipation* in the production of particular forms of utterance and thus amplifies the importance of the specific *contextual interests* of individuals' (discursive) actions. My wider purpose is to suggest how school students might 'invest', or not, those constituents of 'adolescence' which might include seemingly transient knowledge of pop music, and other popular culture, and overlapping fantasies of sexuality and consumption.

Bourdieu, in elaborating his account of linguistic, as always also 'economic', exchange argues that:

> ...anticipation of the sanctions of the market helps to determine the production of the discourse. This anticipation, which bears no resemblance to a conscious calculation, is an aspect of the linguistic habitus which, being the product of a prolonged and primordial relation to the laws of a certain market, tends to function as a practical sense of the acceptability and the probable value of one's own linguistic productions and those of others on different markets. It is this sense of acceptability, and not some form of rational calculation oriented towards the maximization of symbolic profits, which, by encouraging one to take account of the probable value of discourse during the process of production, determines corrections and all forms of self-censorship - the concessions one makes to a social world by accepting to make oneself acceptable in it.
>
> Since linguistic signs are also goods destined to be given a price by powers capable of providing credit (varying according to the laws of the market on which they are placed), linguistic production is inevitably affected by the anticipation of market sanctions...(Bourdieu, 1992: p.77)

Within schools, and especially in the production of discourse for teachers, school students routinely anticipate the value that may be placed upon their words, written and spoken. Often, their tacit calculations must include judgements of the priority to be given to overlapping, but divergent, 'markets': markets constituted by their peers as well as those more formally evident in addressing teachers. In this multi-layered context, there may often be no easy judgement of 'acceptability' and of what form of discursive act might achieve the most value. But such judgements are made and, in

Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I will suggest how the school students I worked with reenacted relations of class, of age and of gender in their discussions and assignments. To anticipate, it is worth stressing here that students' orientations to their educational futures appeared to frame their 'anticipation of profits'. Bourdieu, again, provides a helpful formulation:

> What guides linguistic production is not the degree of tension of the market or, more precisely, its degree of formality, defined in the abstract, for any speaker, but rather the relation between a degree of 'average' objective tension and a linguistic habitus itself characterized by a particular degree of sensitivity to the tension of the market...The practical anticipation of the potential rewards or penalties is a practical quasi-corporeal sense of the reality of the objective relation between a certain linguistic and social competence and a certain market, through which this relation is accomplished. It can range from the certainty of a positive sanction, which is the basis of *certitudo sui*, of *self-assurance*, to the certainty of a negative sanction, which induces surrender and silence, through all the intermediate forms of insecurity and timidity. (Bourdieu, 1992: p.81)

The differentiation of the linguistic habitus suggested here is particularly pertinent to the analysis I develop in later chapters. I have examined the variety of ways in which the students 'do adolescence' (or sometimes avoid performing 'adolescence' at all)[4] in terms of a broad contrast between the two, very different, sites of my research. But, as I have suggested, 'doing adolescence' is also complicated by issues of gender, sometimes of ethnicity, and, further, of location in the school's organization of age phases. Though Bourdieu's

concepts inform my analysis, in the detail of the practice with which I am concerned there are often both more nuanced features of social identity, and more uncertainties, to consider (see, especially, Chapter 6). Thus, though I borrow from Bourdieu's conceptual repertoire, I do not intend to offer a detailed exemplification of his approach in what is, methodologically, a study very different from those with which Bourdieu has himself been associated.

Sexuality, Consumption, Agency

In later chapters, I place considerable emphasis on the importance of sexuality in school students' negotiations of their institutional position. This might well be read as confirmation of the inevitability of 'adolescence' and of its crisis ridden sexuality. Certainly, in the social and institutional conditions which have prevailed in the recent past, there is no doubt that sexuality figures centrally in the cultures of youth and is critical to many of the conflicts which arise between young people and adults.[5] Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, for example, place sexuality as central both to rock music and to the concerns of its audience:

> Of all the mass media rock is the most explicitly concerned with sexual expression. This reflects its function as a youth cultural form: rock treats the problem of puberty, it draws on and articulates the psychological and physical tensions of adolescence...(Frith and McRobbie, 1978/79: p.3).

There is a risk in this, as in my own account, of reducing the question of 'adolescence' to one seemingly inevitable dimension - sexuality - and of thus, whatever the intention, of reinstating the view that this is necessarily the crucial formative moment in the making of sexually positioned adult subjects (see Taylor and Laing, 1979). However, as I have argued, it may be more appropriate to see 'adolescent sexuality' as, in part, a discursive figure taken up (by some of those positioned as 'adolescents') and used in the construction of a sense of autonomy or agency, and therefore actively drawn into forms apparently defiant of adult and institutional power, if also 'invested' in other, less formal, markets. Thus the sexual elements in the 'resistances' to schooling documented by Paul Willis and by Angela McRobbie[6] can be understood, not as natural expressions of an emergent adult sexuality, but as enactments of those forms of behaviour for which schools themselves produce some of the pre-conditions. Without, and often even with, an adequate *'sense of one's own social worth'* (Bourdieu, 1992: p.82) in terms of the educational market, sexualized acts anticipate other, and sometimes additional, returns.

Consumption, and especially the consumption of popular music, provides an other 'market' in which, and from which,

those positioned as 'adolescent' can derive a distinctive sense of agency. Willis (1990), for example, argues that it is in 'adolescence' and early adulthood that people 'form symbolic moulds through which they understand themselves and their possibilities for the rest of their lives' (Willis, 1990: p.7).[7] In the context of this broad claim, he identifies music as central (Willis, 1990: p.59), arguing that:

> By listening to music together and using it as a background to their lives, by expressing affiliation to particular taste groups, popular music becomes one of the principal means by which young people define themselves. (Willis, 1990: p.69).
>
> Music, in short, is not just something young people like and do. It is in many ways the model for their involvement in a common culture which provides the resources to see beyond the immediate requirements and contradictions of work, family and the dole. (Willis, 1990: p.82).

By contrast with the assumptions which have informed the growth of Media Studies in schools (see Chapter 1), where film and television have been the privileged media, these observations are, at least, reminders that the most intensely pursued interests of young people lie more in music than in the media which preoccupy their teachers. However, rather than posit a necessary relation between 'adolescence' and music as a particular medium, I want to argue that the intensity of their involvement is diffuse, merging into preoccupations with other forms of media consumption - such as video and computer games - and inseparable from tastes in

clothes or attitudes to drugs and many other culturally significant commodities of consequence for them. Music, thus embedded in a wider context of consumption, should not be 'isolated out' as the preeminently powerful medium.

It is important to note here that Cohen (see Bates, 1984; Cohen 1986; 1997) has given these arguments around the importance of popular cultural resources to 'adolescents' a psychoanalytic turn.[8] In his rethinking of the concept of 'transitions' (between 'stages'), he hints at how a psychoanalytically informed account might further complicate accounts of 'adolescence' too circumscribed by immediate contexts. For example, Cohen argues that 'the family romance in all its forms... potentially connects the child to sites of social aspiration outside both family *and* school' (Bates, 1984: pp.148-9). Other resources, derived from other scenes, are incorporated into the fantasies constructed both within families and in the gender divided self-presentations of adolescent peers. Thus, in delineating the family romance, he writes of:

> ...normative structures of projective identification through which parents and children, usually of the same sex, misrecognise in each other the social embodiment of developmental ideals constructed by the dominant culture...[Thus] TV, or movie stars, rock stars, sporting personalities...furnish the models for 'supermum' or 'superdad' against which actual parents are often compared invidiously. They also provide all those 'famous' first names (e.g. Elvis, Marilyn) whose symbolic function is to inscribe the child's history in a certain genealogy of parental desire. (Cohen, in Bates, 1984: p.148).

Such transformations of the immediate facts of family relations and identities are not, of course, peculiar only to the working class subjects of Cohen's research. To some extent, in Chapter 6, where I discuss mainly middle-class students, I suggest comparable possibilities - that the transitions in which the students are positioned are, in part, explored in terms of other places, other selves and a sexuality somewhat disembedded from real relations with others.

To reiterate, the wider argument here is that the domain of popular cultural consumption is a significant rival to education in providing a context for other means to experience a sense of self-worth. Transposed into the educational context, a habitus formed in part through an involvement with popular cultural consumption,[9] may enable some students to sustain a difference and a distance from the inculcation of a more academic culture. For others, it may coexist with the acquisition of an academic habitus or, as will be apparent in later chapters, may be a resource actively drawn into an anticipation of a future, educated, self.

In the recent history of 'action research' initiatives in media education (see Buckingham, 1990; Buckingham and Sefton-

Green, 1994; and, for an example from English, Moss, 1989), the relation between informal cultural knowledge and formal learning in school has been conceptualized in terms derived from, in addition to Bourdieu, the work of Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1962; 1978). To conclude this chapter I want to note the continuing importance of Vygotsky's distinction between 'spontaneous' and 'scientific' concepts. Spontaneous concepts are those learned, initially, embedded in their contexts of use, with immediate concrete referents, and without being formally taught. Scientific concepts are, again initially, abstract, and are introduced through formal instruction. Such concepts are systematic and their learning requires conscious reflection on their place within 'a system of relationships of generality' (Vygotsky, 1962: p.92). In media education, which is often defined by a distinctive repertoire of concepts (genre, representation, audience and institution, most broadly), it has been argued that a key focus of attention in teaching should be upon the relation between such scientific concepts and those already in use among children and young people, especially in their everyday experience of the media (see Buckingham, 1990: pp.218-220). In Vygotsky's terms, spontaneous and scientific concepts are neither fixed nor insulated from each other:

> ...from the very beginning the child's scientific and his spontaneous concepts - for instance, "exploitation", and "brother" - *develop in reverse directions*: Starting far apart, they move to meet each other. This is the key point of our hypothesis.

> The child becomes conscious of his spontaneous concepts relatively late; the ability to define them in words, to operate with them at will, appears long after he has acquired the concepts. He has the concept (i.e., knows the object to which the concept refers), but is not conscious of his own act of thought. The development of a scientific concept, on the other hand, usually *begins* with its verbal definition and its use in non-spontaneous operations - with working on the concept itself. It starts its life in the child's mind at the level that his spontaneous concepts reach only later. (Vygotsky, 1962: p.108)

In these terms, the encounter in which young people are taught, in the context of a Media Studies course, is not one where formal instruction should *displace* students' existing informal knowledge. To the contrary, teaching should recognize and address such knowledge, enabling young people (and, I would argue, the teacher) to develop a habit of more systematic, conscious reflection upon what they already know. It is not my intention, in this thesis, to investigate the validity of Vygotsky's theories but my arguments are located in a 'tradition' of English and Media teaching which conceptualizes its engagement with the agency of young people in a continuing debate with his work.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have reviewed a number of contributions to the understanding of 'youth' and 'adolescence'. I have also argued for a strongly discursive understanding of subjectivity and of positioning in the age-phase of 'adolescence'. As later chapters will show, it is in the

students' interpretative 'remaking' of their own social and institutional positions that some sense of their agency can be identified. Given the difficulty of the transition in which they are placed, it is not surprising that their cultural choices are among small things (cf. Hebdige, 1979; Mac an Ghaill, 1994) and that, just as they distance themselves from children, their activities might also seem no more than mere play to adults. But if small things, and the differentiations they facilitate, are largely a matter of indifference to non-participants in their contexts of use, they do figure in the currency of social exchange among the students with whom I discussed popular music and the 'minor differences' they invoked will be considered in my analysis.

In the next chapter, I want to give an account of the methods I adopted in my research. I also want to make identity a more explicit methodological issue, placing some emphasis on the negotiation of identities in the classroom setting between myself and the students I taught. The chapter also aims to situate my research in terms of a 'progressive focusing' of the thesis through reflective practice as a teacher.

Notes

1. Cohen emphasises the importance of psychoanalysis in challenging:

'...what might be called the Whig interpretation of life history, the notion that growing up is a process of progressive enlightenment in which the subject moves from a state of childhood innocence or ignorance, to the eventual wisdom (or cynicism) of old age. More than a trace of this model can be found in sociologies of youth where transition is seen as a one way process - the transition from school to work, or childhood to adulthood. Freud's concepts of regression, compulsion to repeat, and transference, show that model up for what it is, an example of retrospective wish fulfilment, a convenient adult myth. Psycho-analytical research properly requires us to abandon the notion of transition, in favour of the notion of transposition.' (Cohen, 1986: pp.33-4).

2. This example was suggested by conversations with Dr. Dina Dhorajiwala.

3. Bakhtin (1988) offers an interesting perspective on this: 'Both the authority of discourse and its internal persuasiveness may be united in a single word - one that is *simultaneously* authoritative and internally persuasive - despite the profound differences between these two categories of alien discourse. But such unity is rarely a given - it happens more frequently that an individual's becoming, an ideological process, is characterized precisely by a sharp gap between these two categories: in one, the authoritative word (religious, political, moral, the word of a father, of adults and of teachers, etc.) that does not know internal persuasiveness, in the other internally persuasive word that is denied all privilege, backed up by no authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society (not by public opinion, nor by scholarly norms, nor by criticism), not even in the legal code. The struggle and dialogic interrelationship of these categories of ideological discourse are what usually determine the history of an individual ideological consciousness.' (p.142)

4. Compare Butler's (1990) argument that gender is a 'performance': 'There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively

constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (p.25); 'Construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency, the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible' (p.147).

5. See Hebdige's (1979) reading of punk style.

6. See Willis (1977); McRobbie in CCCS Women's Studies Group (1978); also, Nava and McRobbie (1984).

7. Bourdieu, by contrast, emphasises a much earlier formation of an indvidual habitus. See Bourdieu (1986): p.75.

8. Giddens also argues for some recognition of the complex combination, or 'layering together', of discursive and practical consciousness with the unconscious:

'...a theory of motivation also has to relate to the unacknowledged conditions of action: in respect of unconscious motives, operating or [sic] 'outside' the range of the self-understanding of the agent.' (Giddens, 1979: p.59).

He follows this assertion with a more detailed consideration of the terms in which the formation of the subject, and of agency, might be reappraised through a selective reading of Lacan. The attraction of the Lacanian account lies in its 'radical' reading of Freud - emphasising that 'the "I" is already "internally divided" through the very process of achieving that status.' (Giddens; 1979: p.121). This is, of course, a significant move beyond the approach to subjectivity allowed by most kinds of discourse analysis; their limitation, if also their provisional advantage, is that questions of an 'intra-psychic' nature are bracketed out.

9. One possible 'popular' habitus could be characterized in the terms suggested by Johnson in CCCS Education Group II (1991) p.71, in his emphasis on forms of cultural 'borrowing, mixing and fusion'.

Chapter 3: Classroom Research - Contexts and Identities

1. Introduction

This is a long chapter. It is divided into the following sections:

1. Introduction
2. Methodology
3. Identities
4. The Contexts of the Research
5. Methods
6. Analytic Procedures
7. Conclusion

In this introduction, I want to provide an outline chronology of my research and a summary account of the data I gathered. The following chronology represents the main research activities through a period of three years and some later initiatives which have a retrospective relevance to my argument. However, not all of these research activities are reported in this thesis because some turned out to be too tangential, or were unproductive or, with the later enquiries, simply could not be included within the boundaries of this volume.[1] In reading this chronology, it is important to recognize that this was research conducted alongside full-time employment of a particular kind. I was a tutor for English PGCE students at the Institute of Education and also taught MA Media Studies students, of whom a significant number were also teachers. The research that I did should not be split off from my involvement in the field of teacher education, with particular reference to English and Media

Studies. The questions I raised in my research were not insulated from my working practice and, just as I intended my research to inform aspects of that practice, so that practice shaped and enabled my research. In particular, I depended upon a knowledge of schools, and a pre-existing set of working relationships with English Departments, accumulated in my three previous years of PGCE teaching. Moreover, as an Institute tutor spending a great deal of time out in schools (cf. Green, 1997: p.150), and as both a former ILEA secondary school teacher and outer London tertiary college lecturer, I had a sense of involvement with a particular culture of teaching and a pre-existing position in its associated social networks.

A Research Chronology

June-July 1992: Preliminary discussions and interviews with year 10 GCSE Media Studies students (Hackney). Provisional transcription and analysis of data. The 'pilot' study - see Appendix 1.

September 1992: Presentation of initial findings - Domains of Literacy Conference, Institute of Education.

September-November 1992: Classroom 'observation' with year 11 GCSE Media Studies class. 'Time-use' diaries - see Appendix 2.

December 1992: Planning a 'Music-Audience' unit for the GCSE class - discussions with Head of English (Richard) and with David Buckingham.

January-March 1993: Teaching GCSE Media Studies class - 'Music-Audience' unit. Recording and transcribing small group evaluations. Collecting and copying assignments.

April 1993: Presentation of findings - AERA Annual Meeting, Atlanta.

November-December 1993: Interviews with English and Media teachers (former PGCE and MA students - not included in this thesis).

January 1994: Interview with Alison (Hackney: English and Media teacher). Transcription and analysis.

March 1994: Interview with Richard (Hackney: Head of English).

April 1994: Presentation of findings - AERA Annual Meeting, New Orleans.

May-June 1994: Provisional analysis of GCSE written assignments from the 'Music-Audience' unit.

September 1994: Presentation of findings - Domains of Literacy Conference, Institute of Education.

November 1994: Media Research Group, Institute of Education - Desert Island Discs seminar.

January-March 1995: Desert Island Discs project with year 12 A Level Media Studies students (Edmonton). Provisional selection and analysis of students' written responses.

April 1995: Presentation of findings - AERA Annual Meeting, San Francisco.

July 1995: Further presentation - A Level Media Studies conference, Institute of Education.

September 1995: Presentation of draft extracts from concluding chapter: European Conference on Educational Research, Bath.

December 1995: Discussion with Edmonton students involved with Desert Island Discs project - conducted by Pete Fraser. Transcription and provisional analysis (see Appendix 3).

March 1996: Discussion with Edmonton students (see Appendix 3)

April 1996: Presentation of findings - AERA Annual Meeting, New York.

January/June/July 1997: Interviews with Edmonton Media teachers (not included in this thesis).

Looking back over this chronology, it is important to note here that the main period of the research (1992-5) coincided with that of an intensification in the imposition of the National Curriculum. In common with those teachers involved in the research, I was concerned with sustaining, and extending, those ways in which the curriculum might enable teachers to engage with, and encourage collaborative reflection upon, the immediate and popular cultural experience of their students. Though locating my research firmly in media education, I was thus placed, more broadly, in alliance with the interests of English teachers in their argument with the National Curriculum (see Jones, 1994; and the concluding chapter of this thesis).

In the following review of the data, it should be evident that the order in which I have presented the data in this thesis corresponds broadly to the order in which I was able to carry out its first, provisional, analysis. This is significant because it illustrates how my research progressed through a series of initiatives, planned, enacted, documented and analyzed before the next step, in terms of further empirical research or selective (re) focusing, was conceived and carried out. The research took shape through a process of 'progressive focusing', a metaphor which, I want to suggest, most adequately represents the logic of my enquiry (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: pp.175-6).[2] I should make it

clear that I am not using the term 'progressive focusing' with reference to, for example, curriculum evaluation[3] but as a way of describing my own progress through a series of encounters, each developing from, and informed by, the difficulties, and the strengths, of encounters earlier in the series. Later encounters involved attempts to expand upon and to explore issues encountered earlier and I was thus proceeding by analysing data, making decisions about further data collection on the basis of that analysis and, subsequently, analysing such additional data with further implications for research (and teaching) in mind (cf. Altrichter, Posch and Somekh, 1993; McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 1996). Very occasionally, data has been introduced out of *this* chronological sequence, but I have deviated from the overall strategy only to introduce an example to foreshadow a later argument or to illustrate teachers' perspectives where they are most salient to the data derived from exchanges with students.

The data I gathered in the conduct of my research was entirely circumscribed by institutional encounters: between myself and various students and between myself and several teachers, one of whom (Richard) I collaborated with over a period of several weeks and with whom I discussed my research intermittently over a period of two years. In these encounters I was always, relatively, an outsider, and known

to be, at least, a temporary presence. But I was also someone who acted, and inhabited the school space, as a teacher - returning with other teachers to the English Department office, or to a staffroom, at breaks and seeking contact with students only within Media Studies, or sometimes English, lessons. Even at the very beginning, when I was more attracted by ethnographic than 'action research' precedents (cf. Pollard, 1985),[4] I nevertheless entered the Hackney school as if I was a teacher. Settings other than classrooms, or offices used for a similar purpose, were not my concern. My preoccupation was with those encounters and exchanges in which teaching and learning were expected to take place and with the limits and peculiarities of knowing students within such institutionally specific constraints.[5]

Not only was my data collected only within these institutionally framed encounters, it was also most substantially produced through my interventions *as a teacher*. Some, relatively slight, observational data, particularly from the Hackney school, was recorded in my classroom notes, and, where it has helped to explain the circumstances in which classroom encounters took place, I have included it. To some extent, I kept a record of particular kinds of behaviour and sometimes of comments made by students to myself, to each other, and to their teacher. I made sketches of the classroom

layout, wrote in the names of students and thus accumulated a record of groupings, absences and presences, and forms of organization for particular lessons. These records were not dissimilar to those I advised student teachers to keep in preparation for teaching a particular class; and they served my purposes in a similar way.

However, the data upon which I focused more consistently was that which I gathered through my own direct engagement with the students and which I recorded on audiotape. The data discussed in Appendix 1 is taken from interviews and discussions with a small group of students in the Hackney school. The students were withdrawn, briefly, from their Media Studies lessons and recorded in an adjacent classroom. The audiotapes provided me with data which, though problematic, was productive by being so. The tapes provided not just a record of what the students said to me but of some aspects of my own engagement with their utterances as they happened. I also made notes on my own feelings about the awkwardness of these encounters soon after they took place.

The frame for these initial interviews was, as I conceived it at the time, a 'pilot' study: an attempt to orientate myself through dialogue with GCSE Media Studies students in a school similar, in some respects, to the one in which I had taught Media Studies. The issue, for me, was that of the

relative neglect of popular music in Media Studies and the terms in which that neglect might be overcome. The 'pilot' was therefore an opening move in my research project. However, I have placed my analysis of that data in an appendix, rather than include it in the main sequence of data chapters, because it opens up areas of enquiry too numerous and too wide ranging to develop on the basis of the data I subsequently collected. The progressive focusing of my research took me elsewhere, drawing back from curiosity about forms of engagement with music out of school, and directing my attention more to the awkwardness of encounters between teacher and taught in those exchanges framed by a concern with pop music. As I slowly refocused my research through June to December 1992, it moved closer to forms of 'action research', and 'doing ethnography'[6] became little more than a lingering fantasy.

As Kemmis (1993) represents it, 'action research' typically involves:

> ...a spiral of self-reflection (a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting). It is essentially participatory in the sense that it involves participants in reflection on practices. It expresses a commitment to the improvement of practices, practitioners' understandings, and the settings of practice. And it is collaborative, wherever possible involving coparticipants in the organization of their own enlightenment in relation to social and political action in their own situations. (Kemmis, 1993: pp.184-5)

My initial planning included discussion with *students* of Media Studies and, only much later, direct consultation with teachers. Between those two 'moments' in the research, significant shifts took place. My starting point was an assumption that the students had a knowledge of popular music which they could develop and reflect upon in the context of Media Studies and, perhaps implicitly, I also assumed that their teachers would neither be very aware of their knowledge nor have any easy access to it. So what happened to lead me to seek further data from their teachers, and from others in the wider network in which I was involved?

First of all, I began to realize during my first provisional analysis of the 'pilot' interviews that, rather than take what the students had to say as data to be privileged as evidence of youth cultural concerns, I should interpret the data as peculiar to the institutional encounters in which it was collected. So, additionally, what teachers might have to say about their own experience of such encounters was already beginning to seem relevant. Aware that I was embarking on this enquiry, several teachers in the English Department office, in Hackney, made casual observations which alerted me to the need to attend more carefully to their perspectives.[7] In both Hackney and Edmonton I was involved in casual conversations with teachers about the research that I was doing and, as I discuss below,

I made some effort to record more formal discussions with several teachers. In fact, this parallel project, recording interviews with English and Media teachers, produced much more substantial data than I have been able to include in this thesis and I have thus drawn upon it very selectively and only where it has been relevant to my analysis of the teacher-student exchanges which form my main data base.

I can suggest further reasons for the progressive (re)focusing of my enquiry. Between the 'pilot' study and the teacher interviews, I did several other things. Some of these were not productive of substantial data. Through the Autumn Term of 1992, I attended GCSE Media Studies lessons whenever I could but, with interruptions caused by two weeks of year 11 work experience and Richard's absence on jury service, I was present on only six occasions. During this period, I asked those whom I had involved in the 'pilot' study to keep a record of their 'domestic' use of music, on radio, cassette and CD, and to make notes on the social circumstances and on their own activities (doing homework, falling asleep and trying to wake up, for example). I gave them each a notebook in which to keep a diary, each accompanied by a list of questions to which I wanted them to respond. Of the four students, Margaret lost hers, Stephen and Alan completed one week, or less, in meagre note-form and only Asiye wrote a

more continuous commentary *and* returned the notebook to me (see Appendix 2). If I imagined that I was asking them to participate in my research, it seems likely that, from their point of view, I had asked them to do extra homework without connecting it to any current topic in the course, and without, at this stage, establishing myself as 'their' teacher.

It was this largely unsuccessful tactic which, following the inadequacies of the 'pilot' study, led me to decide to adopt a more clearly defined position as their teacher and to examine the difficulties of doing 'work' around pop music from within the set of exchanges in which I would thus place myself. What I learnt from my attempts to involve these students in the completion of 'time-use' diaries was that the context was unavoidably one in which my request was located within the formal domain of the school where I had, despite some attempts to be ambiguous, been 'identified' as a teacher. Like a homework in English, asking them to do the 'time-use diaries' implied my right to intrude into their time and their everyday life at home. Moreover, I set the terms on which they were asked to represent their everyday experience. To some extent, they may have been uncomfortable with this extension of surveillance[8] or it may just have been one more thing to do, and for no clear purpose.

Whatever the case, my classroom notes during this phase provided me with data which, in retrospect, I could read as evidence of the institutional framing of my encounters with these students and as a trace of my own process of working out what to do next. The following extracts illustrate this:

> Handed out 'time-use' diaries at the end of the lesson - they were tolerant about them - Alan looked weary, slumped over his drum sticks - and, questioned, acknowledges that he plays drums in school. (18.9.92)
>
> Asked about time-use diaries - Stephen, done some days but left it at home; Alan left it at home and probably not yet done any pages. Asiye - had it here and had done Saturday-Wednesday...left it with her. Margaret - said she'd done about five days but had left it at home...slightly apologetic. (25.9.92)
>
> Chatted briefly to Stephen, Asiye, Margaret, Alan acknowledged my existence. Collected notebooks from Stephen and Asiye (2.10.92)
>
> Stephen called me over to listen to his ragga tape - and was pleased that I couldn't understand it.
>
> Alan volunteered his diary but was unwilling to do more - I remarked that he obviously doesn't like writing...he responded to the effect that he didn't like school at all, that it was boring...somewhat dissatisfied by the lack of consistency in drum teachers...
>
> The same drift, lack of pace, the Nintendo magazines and the drumsticks, intermittent conversations...
>
> The girls more actively focused, working towards completion of the work... (23.10.92)
>
> 'Sir I'm going toilet right' (Margaret - seeing me through the door...today dressed in the Jaeger stuff...feeling too dressed up and formal by far)...very much addressing me as a teacher...

> ...Margaret (late) - promising (!) to bring in the diary next week
>
> ...Margaret apologetic about not having the diary...addressed mockingly (or self mockingly?) as belonging to the chosen few...
>
> [...]
>
> - the difficulty of what to be here - RQ coming in to intervene, being the teacher, my own position too marginal, too ill defined...what kind of questions to ask? Without being teacherly? Here just to maintain some continuity of presence? (4.11.92)
>
> Dropped in about 3.10 pm - just to collect Margaret's time-use diary - she looked somewhat guilty/apologetic when I arrived - obvious she didn't have it...they were all busy selecting images from magazines provided by RQ (cf. my own provision, in the past - very similar Marie Claire etc)...(11.11.92)

The outcome of this was that I decided to move from the ambivalence of my identity in this period to a more settled engagement as *their* teacher, by contrast with the more dislocated teacherly presence of the earlier months. In December 1992, with Richard, I planned a unit of work which I would take responsibility for teaching. The data that I collected during this further phase provided the basis for Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 reports two group evaluations of the unit. A third group (of girls) was not recorded because their frequent absences frustrated that intention.[9] All four of the students involved in the discussion and interviews reported in Appendix 1 were included in the evaluations I did record, but in combination with others from their class.

Chapter 5 examines the students' assignments, completed during the taught unit. This data was produced more decisively within the formal teacher-taught exchange, as writing for assessment. As the chronology makes clear, I did not analyze this data until more than a year later and at a time when I had turned my attention to recording and transcribing interviews with the Hackney teachers. The context for my re-reading of the assignments was thus one in which I had made a dialogue with teachers a much more substantial concern; indeed it had not been a concern at all at the inception of my research.

I want to pause on this and to draw upon one example of the data I derived from my interview with Richard, the Head of English in Hackney. In the Summer of 1992 I had formulated my research by borrowing a question from the controversies surrounding the introduction of the National Curriculum for English: *'knowledge about language'?* I wanted to turn this into a question about music, to ask what 'knowledge about music' would be if attention was turned to it in the context provided by English and Media education. It was a question, or rather a puzzle, to which there was no straightforward answer; I had no answer to it when I began the research. My own initial preoccupation was with the 'knowledge about music' that students might already have, with how such

knowledge might be a resource in media teaching, and with how students might be involved in reflection upon the social dimensions of their knowledge. In this respect, I was already acting in terms somewhat consistent with the practice of 'progressive' English teaching (see Moss, 1989; Buckingham, 1990; Sarland, 1991; Jones, 1992). But I was much less concerned than the teachers to whom I talked, and with whom I collaborated to varying degrees, to emphasise the 'knowledge about music' that teachers might be responsible for making available to the students. My approach, even in planning the taught unit, was to conceive of teaching as constructing the context within which students might articulate and reflect upon their existing informal knowledge of popular music.

I was interested in the neglect, by Media Studies, of what students might already know and thus tended to locate teachers as ignorant of such knowledge. Richard (interviewed in March 1994), in offering reflections on the teaching we had done in the preceding year, unsettled this assumption. He spoke as an 'insider', able to draw upon the resources of accumulated experience available to teachers long familiar with the particular setting and the students they teach. In the following comment he appears to address 'me', but in terms of my public identity as an academic researcher, and thus somewhat at odds with my own more internal sense of myself as a teacher, just like him:

> ...in a way you're just picking up what they know and that's an important aspect of it but sometimes - What are the sources of their own knowledge and so on? And you're sort of taking that as a kind of something given and almost y'know with a sort of reverential attitude but just as with everything else that they know, it's a mixture of real insight, their own development, their own purposes, as well as received wisdom and prejudice and all sorts of things and I think you do actually have to have a better, a clearer theoretical stance and be, be more upfront about times when you need to be a bit more didactic and make an input, I think...

This Gramscian emphasis on knowledge as an uneven mix of 'good sense' (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971) with more limited, and limiting, beliefs and (mis)conceptions was one that I thought that I shared. Perhaps I also felt that I should defer to the authority of his 'situated' account (see Hammersley, 1993: p.219). But the tension between this apparent construction of my identity, and a strong sense of my own history as a teacher, did refocus my reading of the classroom data - I had to consider from what standpoint, and for what purposes, I might be conducting my analysis. Again, this is a feature of the process of 'progressive focusing' though, in this case, through the retrospective work of data selection and analysis. I did not resolve this sense of disjunction between standpoints but, as will be evident through Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I turned the analysis towards an audience primarily of practitioners - teachers of Media Studies and English.

Chapter 6 draws upon a *selection* of writing from the A Level Media Studies students in Edmonton. The selection was made simply because there was far more data in this phase of my research than I could represent in any detail (12 boys and 10 girls returned written work to me). I classified all the writing I received in terms of particular themes, or their combination: childhood, friendships, summer/holidays, sport and so on. From each thematic cluster I selected one or two examples and, additionally, tried to maintain a reasonably representative balance between boys and girls. The pieces chosen thus illustrate the range of writing produced by the class. Again, additional data of various kinds have been of some importance here. I made notes on their classroom presentations, on informal conversations with their teachers and drew some 'background' information from a brief questionnaire completed by the class in March 1995 (see Appendix 3). The questionnaire was conceived as an ancillary task, requesting responses to questions about family background, previous schooling, habits of media use, domestic access to media technologies and, not least, their anticipated futures. The completion of this questionnaire was a part of their A Level course: they were already involved in discussions about how to investigate media audiences. It was consistent, therefore, with my decision to work with students through the forms of exchange in which Media teachers might themselves engage.

In summary, through Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I discuss data of different kinds - small group talk, GCSE assignments (images and writing) and autobiographical writing by A Level students. The coherence of this data-base lies in its salience to a single question: How can media teachers engage with their students' past, and continuing, experience of popular music? Each set of data is derived from within pedagogic practice and, from within such practice, provides evidence of various, distinct, ways of seeking an engagement with the (delineated) meanings that popular music might have for groups of 15-17 year old students. The order of presentation of the data represents a process of analysis in which problems and limitations became apparent and thus informed more sustained attention to another kind of data (the shift of focus from Chapter 4 to Chapter 5) or informed another kind of pedagogic initiative (the shift from Chapter 5 to Chapter 6). The standpoint from which this data-base is coherent is that of reflective practice in the development of media education.

2. Methodology

In the rest of this chapter I want to elaborate on the process of research as I have described it in the preceding pages. During the three years through which I did my

research, I tended to locate what I was doing as 'on the side of' the ethnographic claim.[10] In fact, the research was not, and could not be, ethnographic in the sense that many of its professional advocates would give to the term. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) give this definition:

> ...for us ethnography (or participant observation, a cognate term) is simply one social research method, albeit a somewhat unusual one, drawing as it does on a wide range of sources of information. The ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: p.2)

By contrast with *this* definition of ethnography, the methods adopted in my research correspond more closely to models of 'reflective practice' and to forms of action research (see Winter, 1989; Kemmis, 1993). Bryant (1996), for example, characterises 'action research', though preferring the term 'reflective practice', in terms which usefully define my own sense of participation, not in an ethnographic mode, but as a practitioner:

> action research is carried out by practitioners or at least...researchers are actually participating in the practices being researched, and working collaboratively with practitioners. The point here is that action research is concerned both to understand and to change particular situations, and that researchers who are not in and of the situation are not in a position to do either. They cannot share the informal theory of practitioners and cannot possess the situated knowledge essential for change. (Bryant, in Scott and Usher, 1996: p.114)

My own earlier educational research (Richards, 1990) was carried out while teaching GCSE Media Studies, and other subjects, full-time in a tertiary college. Though I was not a school teacher during the course of this research, my entry into Media Studies classrooms, and my actions within them, depended upon that earlier formation (1978-89) as an English and Media teacher. Thus, whatever the disjunctions between myself as a researcher and the teachers with whom I collaborated, I also had the resources of a practitioner appropriate to the very particular contexts of my research.[11] In Hackney, for example, I thought of myself as sharing, with Richard, a common 'habitus': a way of being, and knowing how to act as, a teacher within that context. In fact, for almost five years I had taught in a comparable school in the adjacent borough of Islington. I did conceive of my enquiry as one involving 'participant observation' - but participation in the classroom as a teacher, not, despite my early attempts to just 'observe', participation with the students as some kind of 'friend' or 'acquaintance'. As I have suggested, I have therefore written something of my own formation as a teacher into my account of the research process and, again, with the intention to illustrate the disjunctions and awkwardness between teacher and taught.

This kind of 'participation' doesn't make the research ethnographic, even if, more broadly, it was informed by

studies produced in an ethnographic *style*,[12] and, to some extent, by those examples of ethnographic research which do directly seek to inform educational practice (see, for example, Willis, 1977; Heath, 1983). In this sense, a distinction made by Green and Bloome (forthcoming) may help to clarify the distance between my own research and 'doing ethnography'. They suggest a three way division between 'doing ethnography', adopting an 'ethnographic perspective' and 'using ethnographic tools':

> ...*doing ethnography* involves the framing, conceptualizing, conducting, interpreting, writing, and reporting associated with a broad, in-depth, and long-term study of a social or cultural group, meeting the criteria for doing ethnography as framed within a discipline or field.
>
> By adopting an *ethnographic perspective*, we mean that it is possible to take a more focused approach (i.e. do less than a comprehensive ethnography) to study particular aspects of everyday life and cultural practices of a social group. Central to an ethnographic perspective is the use of theories of culture and inquiry practices derived from anthropology or sociology to guide the research. The final distinction, *using ethnographic tools*, refers to the use of methods and techniques usually associated with fieldwork. These methods may or may not be guided by cultural theories or questions about the social life of group members. (Green and Bloome, forthcoming: p.6)

In some respects, and despite the fact that my own research did not attempt to equal anything like the scope or detail of Willis (1977) or Heath (1983), it is possible to situate my approach as adopting the methods of reflective practice but from within a broadly *ethnographic perspective*. Thus, though

my concerns have been much more narrowly defined through, and informed by participation in, the practice of media teaching -exploring the implications of including popular music from within its concerns - I have also been guided by aspects of some ethnographic studies (for example - Hewitt, 1986; Rosaldo, 1989). Here, *from a standpoint within the practice of media teaching*, I aim to complicate, and add local detail to, those theoretical accounts of ideology, social reproduction and class which have provided the background to the development of media education in Britain.[13]

Even such apparently constrained classroom research can present significant problems for that form of media education which has aspired to intervene, on behalf of students, to reveal the ideological purposes of the media (see Moss, 1989; Buckingham, 1990; Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994). The 'action research' initiative reported in *Watching Media Learning* (Buckingham, 1990), for example, was a significant attempt to question the 'liberatory' rhetoric of media education in the 1970s and 1980s. From within the limits of participation in classroom practice and of small-scale, situated action research, it was possible to view the 'dominant ideology thesis' as a less than adequate support for the further elaboration of media teaching. The assumptions sometimes encouraged by that thesis, that children might be especially subject to 'mystification' for

example (see Buckingham, 1986; Richards, 1992), have often been recognized as simplistic by teachers themselves seeking to engage children in the deconstruction of the dominant ideology. Theoretical critiques of that 'thesis', notably Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1980) and the post-structuralist theories of Foucault (among numerous others), have contributed to the continuing need to rethink the account of media education offered in some of its formative moments (see, for example, Masterman 1980 and 1985). But much of the impetus for reconsideration has come from within the practice of media teaching itself, from teachers seeking to understand the purpose and outcome of their efforts in institutional conditions radically removed from those in which academic debate is conducted.

In keeping with this history, my own research is located, not in the professional concerns of any one academic discipline, but in the practice I seek to address. For example, the methods of elicitation of data I adopted deliberately replicated those media teachers use in the conduct of their teaching: setting up discussions and writing/practical projects which draw upon the informal cultures of students (cf. Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994; Buckingham, Grahame and Sefton-Green, 1995). Of course, from research perspectives other than those of teacher action research, some of these methods of elicitation may seem

flawed but, given my focus upon practice, discovering and exploring the consequences of such flaws was itself a part of my purpose.[14] Because I regard it as a central responsibility of my research to inform the practice of teachers (in this respect engaging the commitments of action research), I conceived of the research activity as both exploring some existing, and familiar, teaching strategies (see Southern Examining Group, 1994; Chapters 4 and 5 in this thesis) and introducing, in the context of Media Studies, more innovative practices (see Chapter 6). As I have suggested, I have drawn both on my own past experience of teaching and accounts offered by teachers themselves. But, during the research, my position was also somewhat removed from that of teachers and my preoccupations, and therefore my analytic procedures, were shaped by the particular academic context in which I worked - the Department of English, Media and Drama at the Institute of Education.[15] Thus, my production of this text has involved the *appropriation* and *reinflection* of the words of both school students and teachers. In this thesis, they are not, in any simplistic sense, 'given a voice' but are quoted, or reinscribed, within the structure of my account, an account in which I also address others beyond the dialogue from which their words are taken.[16]

3. Identities

There are important reasons for raising the question of identity in a chapter about methodology. In my research, I was necessarily involved in making decisions about my public identity in the two schools and was also caught up with negotiating a coherent sense of myself as a researcher. I had to consider who the students thought they were talking to and how that might enable, and circumscribe, the further development of the research. But I also had to reflect upon the identities that young people enact *in classroom settings* and how they might negotiate those identities through the forms of exchange, between teacher and taught, more particular to the practice of Media Studies. Pop music is an especially problematic ground on which to pursue such exchanges, as the following extract (from my 'pilot' study data) suggests:

> Margaret: Yeah but the thing is music is a very powerful medium...the music someone listens to...it makes them...sort of behave the way they behave...'cause a lot of people who listen to ragga become raggas and become sort of...some of them do, some of them don't...sort of violent and like that...and people, a lot of people who listen to like hardcore go out to raves take loadsa drugs, it just depends, it just depends on what they're into...
> CR: So what do you mean by hardcore?
> Margaret: Hardcore...you can say hardcore about anything...
> CR: Yeah I know, I'm just trying to sort it all out 'cause I mean acid when I was what, 16, 17, O.K. meant exactly the same thing that it means now...it's a particular drug but it also, the kind of music that you would think of if you said acid or acid rock, something like that, would be Pink Floyd yeah which isn't at all what you're talking about...

Stephen: There's some people out there listen to that, I know listen to it...
Margaret: Yeah loads of people still do
Stephen: Like Nathan
CR: What, they listen to that?
Stephen: Yeah they like it...they still
CR: And how do they dress...would I know that they like it the minute I saw them?
Margaret: Well they dress normal
Stephen: Kind of...not Nathan
CR: Have they got long hair?
Stephen: They just wear jeans...you don't need no...no you wouldn't know
CR: They don't have flares and long hair and stuff like that - no?
Stephen: Our school used to have a lot of people who wear flares but not any more...

This extract is taken from towards the end of a discussion with four students from the GCSE Media Studies class (July 1992, Hackney). I had announced my interest in talking to them in terms of my concern to find ways of introducing pop music into Media Studies. I have selected this extract because of the disjunction between myself and the students and because, in the confusion, particular identity tactics are in play. Margaret, for example, attempts to adopt an almost sociological discourse in her observation that 'music is a very powerful medium' and, though she struggles to sustain it, she thus implicitly constructs herself as, in this context, both educationally competent and knowledgeable about 'youth culture'. Indeed, she takes the context, in which the group have been asked for their 'views' by an adult visitor, as one in which she can speak *about* 'youth culture' and not only from *within* it (see Appendix 1). A part of the identity she enacts here is that of being a 'good student'.

The question I pose, 'So what do you mean by hardcore?', doesn't engage with her general proposition. It is more of a request for information and for some stable definitions in a discussion often entangled in misunderstandings. Margaret does not tell me what I want to know, and she may not have been able to do so. But she sustains her competence in this exchange by turning 'hardcore' towards its adjectival use and away from its particular currency in popular music as a noun (see Chapter 4). My own uncertainty here, not at all feigned, implies a public identity with which I am uncomfortable: bewildered, unhip, outmaneuvered, all feelings unwelcome to an adult, a teacher and an academic. I attempt to deal with this by turning to the use of the term 'acid' in the earlier discussion and do so by situating my own (mis)understanding in an earlier identity ('when I was...16, 17'). I thus attempt both to recover *my* credibility as a knowledgeable person and to suggest something of how I experience my own identity, coming, like them, into this encounter with a particular social history. But I don't elaborate on my own personal, historical and sub-cultural accenting of 'acid' because I want to bring *their* knowledge into view. I don't, for example, tell them about seeing Pink Floyd at the Skyline Ballroom in Hull, or at Hull Art College. Nor do I tell them that, when I was 16, I was abruptly frisked by detectives on the A1 and that they

missed, by 'giving me the benefit of the doubt', black acid on blotting paper wedged in a folder of my own poems. Like them, I keep what I know about myself out of this encounter: but for me, regulating my public identity in this way was also, of course, a methodological choice. However, my particular history has intruded here and, rather than eliciting some clarification of the multiaccentual 'acid' (Volosinov, 1973), in their usage, as I had intended, it enables the students, once again to talk not about themselves, but about others. They thus, once more, in this classroom context, speak as polite, cooperative students and withdraw the more personal and particular versions of identity I would have liked them to offer (see Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995; and the individual interviews with these students in Appendix 1).

Clearly, there are problems with the term 'identity', to the extent that it implies a degree of fixity and reification, but I have preferred to use it here because it can usefully refer to, first of all, the internal experience of acting to remake 'oneself' in some continuity with the 'self-as-it-was', and often in the precarious circumstances of multiple, and changing, social worlds (cf. Harvey, 1989). Secondly, of course, 'identity' refers more to an external matter: being identified, or identifiable, the object of others' attributions. Between the 'internal' and the

'external' there is a complex and shifting relation. How I might be identified, for example, in the exchange discussed above was something over which I attempted to exercise a degree of control and I was thus involved in a process of active self-construction, drawing upon particular discursive, cultural and material resources (see Giddens, 1991; Hewitt, 1992; Harré and Gillett, 1994). But how I employed such identity tactics also included a response to how I felt that I had already been identified by those I was speaking to and, importantly, a 'self-monitoring' consistent with being an adult and a teacher in a formal setting. In the exchange around 'acid', above, I kept my autobiographical details to myself thus, as teachers usually do, sustaining a self-protective opacity (however, see Chapter 6).

In this thesis I use 'identity' to refer to those practices which subjects may adopt in sustaining, and seeking to control, the relation between an internal sense of identity-for-oneself and a more public, external, sense of identity-for-others. Among the social practices through which people 'do identity', forms of narrative ordering are commonplace (Shotter and Gergen, 1989; Giddens, 1991) and may be anchored in collecting (records, books, 'souvenirs') and in other modes of (self) recording (photography, diaries). Aspects of these practices are discussed in Chapter 6. Other practices are more elusive, more transient: the conversational

performance, and negotiation, of identity, for example (see Buckingham, 1993; Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995; and Chapter 4, in this thesis). Widdicombe and Wooffitt, in their analysis of interview data, argue that they:

> ...view identities as *achieved;* not fixed but negotiated products of the ongoing flow of interaction. By this we mean that identities are features which people can occasion as relevant in their day-to-day dealings with each other. (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: p.131)

> ...identity is not seen as a thing that *we are*, a property of individuals, but as something *we do*. It is a practical accomplishment, achieved and maintained through the detail of language use. (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: p.133)

This perspective is useful to the extent that it clarifies my approach to the negotiation of identity between teacher and taught through Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Moreover, unlike the terms 'subjectivity' and 'subjects' (see Kress, 1995: p.87), 'identity', in this usage, suggests an emphasis upon agency. Unlike Widdicombe and Wooffitt, however, I am concerned with a formal institutional setting and cannot therefore entirely endorse the emphasis they place on 'fluidity' (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: p.108) in their analysis of data collected through brief encounters on streets and other public spaces.

In my research, it is essential to recognize the power of schools to 'identify' children, to position them in ways which do not necessarily enhance their experience of subjective agency. In schools, children are routinely

identified and classified in a highly regulated social domain; identities are seemingly overdetermined through multiple discourses of attribution. To be identified as a student is to be placed within a particular educational category: to be in a position which entails learning, being taught and, most often, being younger and subject to authority and judgement. But even thus positioned in this category of ascribed identity children draw on both popular and educational discourses and practices in negotiating a continuing sense of self-identity, of identity-for-themselves in that more assertive sense (Willis, 1977; Hewitt, 1986; Willis, 1990; Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994; Cohen, 1997).

It is worth noting that, though I am using the term 'student' here, this is, in British schools, a formal 'backstage' category, only infrequently spoken with any consistency and, when it is, self-consciously, as an attempt to invite children to take up more scholarly and self-motivated modes of action than those of which they are customarily thought to be capable. In British school discourse students are 'pupils', 'kids', 'children' and sometimes 'youngsters', 'young people', 'young adults' and 'learners'. These finely differentiated subject-positions, and their deployment in pedagogic discourse, are worthy of further close investigation. Here, I am less concerned with

the nuanced differences between these terms than with their common tendency to position young people as subordinate; for the purposes of my argument, this variety of terms can therefore be provisionally subsumed within the category 'student'. It should be remembered, nevertheless, that each variant implies a differently inflected relation between teacher and taught. Moreover, it is important to consider what young people in schools call themselves and to note that the various adult discourses of teachers are unlikely to be taken up, simply, by those thus positioned. Together in the school setting, young people produce other social identities (cf. Hewitt, 1986).

Indeed, the overdetermination of student identities in educational institutions cannot be regarded as a closure, as if such institutions form their subjects entirely in their own terms. Biographical reflection, even among academics, can suggest something of how incomplete the inculcation of the school's preferred cultural identity might be (see, for example, Kuhn, 1995: pp.84-103). For many people, in recalling their educational histories, it is not so difficult to revive a sense of tension between, on the one hand, the class and career destinations legitimated by school and, on the other, self-projections into an alternative future. Such imagined identities, if mostly contingent on the conditions

of 'adolescence', can also be a cultural argument with the pragmatic attainments on offer in the educational exchange.

My own life-history, outlined in the *Introduction* to this thesis, is just one kind of account, but its importance here is methodological. Some degree of reflexive consideration, by researchers, of their own formation can - though with no guarantees - provide a means to construct accounts of other identities, differently constituted of course, but at least thus less 'objectified' in their otherness (see Hollway, 1994). The relational dimension in 'doing research' is a significant concern: the habit of reflecting on one's own presence as a social actor entails both a record of one's public presence and of elements of mood and memory produced in the research context. Thus, in doing the research for this thesis, what I said, what I did, and even what I wore on particular occasions had some salience to the task of interpreting what was said to me, providing hints at the students' understanding of my identity and purposes. For example, it seems likely that my initial 'observer' status and my often informal clothing (jeans, T-shirts, running shoes) led some of them to identify me as a 'student-teacher'. But I also noted personal recollections (mostly *not* voiced features of my self-presentation) which may have contributed to my display of interest on particular occasions, animating the conversation and motivating

unplanned questions. In talking to Stephen about pirate radio for example (see Appendix 1), I recalled (for myself) that, at 14 and 15, I lay awake late at night, every night, listening to the music of off-shore 'pirate' radio stations (mainly Radio 270, anchored in the North Sea off Scarborough), without, after all, needing or wanting to let teachers know about any of it.

So, some recollection of my own relation to schooling and to 'adolescence' has been a significant element in constructing an account of students' school identities. In fact, the more open forms of interview and discussion, which I adopted, tended to exceed a more narrowly conceived intention to elicit responses to research questions. Talking to groups of school students was always constitutive of particular social 'events' - complex social interactions in which relational dynamics, and their continuing outcomes, complicated any tendency to assume that data could be simply 'gathered' or 'extracted'. In Chapter 4, for example, I discuss data which comes out of sessions which took the form of 'group evaluations', 'semi-formal' discussions familiar to students as part of the assessment process in Media Studies. In such a context, my actions were very much those of a teacher concerned to keep discussion going, to open up issues, rather than be constrained by only those questions which I had planned in advance. But with or without

predetermined questions, such discussions need to be analyzed as particular kinds of event.

Doing research in schools can produce situations in which students are even more uneasy about talking to an adult than they are in those routinely occurring between teachers and students. In my approach, it was apparent that I occupied and approximately reenacted, the position of a student teacher, attempting to 'get to know' the class by observing lessons, attempting to talk 'informally' and, eventually, attempting to be 'their' teacher. With my own identity hovering between (mature) 'student' and 'teacher', I rediscovered the institutional imperatives faced by adults in schools: it is a highly regulated domain in which there are particular, and limited, social identities which one can enact. Thus, as Fairclough's (1989) analysis suggests I would have to, as an adult in a classroom, and given my past history, I progressively (re) constituted myself as a teacher:

> ...there is a sense in which we can say that the teacher and the pupil *are what they do*. The discourse types of the classroom set up subject positions for teachers and pupils, and it is only by 'occupying' these positions that one becomes a teacher or a pupil. Occupying a subject position is essentially a matter of doing (or not doing) certain things, in line with the discoursal rights and obligations of teachers and pupils - what each is allowed and required to say, and not allowed or required to say, within that particular discourse type. (Fairclough, 1989: p.38)

To some extent, the presence of a student teacher or a researcher 'acting' like one, does temporarily loosen the routine exchanges of the classroom. But the customary circumscription, implicit in being positioned as a school student, if weakened, was never absent from my encounters with students in both of the schools where I did my research.

To conclude this section, I want to pose a question: to what extent was my research, which invited discussion of popular culture, productive for classroom practice itself? There was no easy commonality between myself and the students (or all of the teachers), but a move into the field of popular culture is an attempt to have conversations beyond those 'allowed' by the more fixed, and singular, subject positions assumed in the formal discourses of schooling. There is an important potential for a reciprocal acknowledgement of the informal elements of people's lives to undercut the polarity of student-teacher subject positions and thus to 'prefigure' alternative forms of educational practice. But if my effort to explore an educational practice which might enable students to reflect on the social meanings of musical tastes and affiliations in their lives was conceived in these terms, it became evident that the outcome of my experiments was always strongly shaped by the specific institutional character of the teacher-student

exchanges in which they were conducted. I will return to reconsider this question in Chapter 7.

4. The Contexts of the Research

I want to turn now to say more about the contexts in which I did the research. I did the research in two schools. The first school, in Hackney, an inner city borough, was a mixed comprehensive for students aged 11-16. The second, in Edmonton, a suburban area in north London, was a mixed, selective school for students aged 11-18. I did not choose the schools primarily because of their difference in location or their social composition. The first school offered me the opportunity to be involved with quite a strong 'progressive' English Department, but without a major commitment to Media Studies. The subject, taught only as a GCSE, though with some introductory work in years 7-9, was supported, but with meagre resources. The Head of English, Richard Quarshie, is not a Media Studies specialist but is a significant figure in the context of English teaching in London. The second school, by contrast, gave me access to a very successful and expanding Media Studies Department, once located within English, but effectively autonomous. Media Studies, taught both as a GCSE and an A Level subject, was buoyant and oversubscribed. I had regularly visited the school with PGCE students to enable them to observe exemplary and innovative

practice, if improvised on a relatively low budget. The Head of Media Studies, Pete Fraser, is a well known and influential figure in media education. Together, the two schools provided me with sites in which I could observe and, to varying degrees, participate in the teaching of Media Studies. Moreover, both Departments, whatever the peculiarity of the circumstances in which each worked, were committed to reflecting upon their practice, were interested in innovation and were broadly sympathetic to research initiatives which might inform their teaching. I judged that, within the constraints of teaching and assessment, each would allow me to conduct experiments in teaching, the first with GCSE students and the second with those studying Media Studies at A Level.

The Hackney school, though set within the inner city, is not quite so entirely working-class in its intake as that might suggest. The area is socially diverse and, through the 1970s and 1980s, attracted elements of the new professional middle-class. The students to whom I talked, in those discussions reported in Chapter 4, were in their last years in the Hackney comprehensive school. To what extent, and by what means, did I 'identify' students that I encountered in terms of class? It was not, initially, my concern to attempt any such identification. For my purposes, they were GCSE Media Studies students in a comprehensive school; their

'wider' social identities were not my primary focus. I did not ask for information which might enable me to place them 'objectively' in class categories. However, I was interested in how they might constitute themselves socially in our encounters. I anticipated that they might 'do' class in negotiating their identities with me (cf. Jordin and Brunt, 1988; Buckingham, 1993: pp.268-9; Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995). In this respect, my expectations were significantly shaped by my own experience of teaching at a comparable school in the adjacent borough of Islington. There, relations between teachers and students had seemed strongly polarised in class terms (see Richards, 1992).

Between teacher and taught, class identifications, and negotiations of such identifications, are made through all the complex vocal and physical features of self-presentation within the institutional setting of the particular school. I did not collect the variety of data which would support a detailed analysis of this feature of my encounters with students. I have noted that my own identity in my encounters with the students was inflected, to some extent, by the choices I made about what to wear. In my classroom notes, I made occasional records of what individual students wore but, as I progressively focused more precisely upon those features of our encounters which were particular to the formal study of pop music in Media Studies, such data became less central

to my enquiry than I had thought they might be. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that I have made some limited use of this data but only when it could be used to clarify an interpretation of the data on which I have constructed the main analytic work of this thesis.

To anticipate this (see Chapter 4), I want to include the following brief examples here. In the Hackney comprehensive, the students did not wear uniform at all. According to my notes, on one day in September 1992, several of those I talked to were dressed, much as usual, in the following way:

> Margaret, white, wore a black Black Hawks T-shirt, dark trousers, laced black boots, numerous bracelets and rings, red lipstick, eyes made up, dark hair loose, chin length.
>
> Stephen, a black student, a black zip-up top, green trousers, trainers, short hair, gold ear-ring.
>
> Alan, white, a green, white and purple sweat-shirt, blue jeans, trainers, short hair.
>
> Asiye, a Turkish speaking girl, black jean jacket, striped open neck-shirt, jeans, patterned socks, black shoes, hair tied back, probably no make up.

In this school, students were, to some extent, *allowed* to maintain continuity between out-of-school identities and their self-presentation through dress in school. They were not, at any age, expected to display proof of their belonging to the institution. The school did not therefore display any claim to extract them from their class (cf. Kuhn, 1995) in the way that many schools with uniforms might appear to do.

In this school, therefore, those discussions in which music was connected with dress were conducted between students wearing their 'own' clothes - their out-of-school 'identities' thus available to be read by others.

The second school, in Edmonton, selects its students at 11, by competitive examination. The area itself is broadly working and lower middle class - an outer London suburb which does not attract professional middle class residents. But the school draws its students from a very wide area, including most of North and North East London and rural areas beyond the city itself. The intake of students is ethnically mixed though my focus, a Sixth Form A Level Media Studies group, was predominantly white. Boys and girls attend in all years and wear uniform through to the end of year 11. The Sixth Form students to whom I talked did not wear any elements of the school uniform and, on the whole, dressed in much the same casual style as the group in Hackney. However, most of the girls wore their hair very long, as did a few of the boys (Spencer, for example), and in many respects they had already acquired the look of university students. In this school, the non-uniform dress of 'Sixth Formers' signified 'adulthood', by its contrast with the regulated clothing of years 7-11, and it seemed likely that markers of any sub-cultural affiliation were subordinate to that overarching contrast (cf. Frith, 1983: p.209)

Though I knew the school very well, and had visited it on many occasions, I confined my research there to the first year (year 12) A Level class alone. They were at a stage in their course which allowed me to involve them in some music related work and to do so without consuming time that, as I emphasise in Chapter 6, they had committed to achieving their futures through education. Whereas I spent most of a year visiting the class in Hackney, and taught them, in Edmonton I was defined much more explicitly as an academic visitor and confined myself to a specific project supported, and mediated, by their A Level Media Studies teachers.

By contrast with the Edmonton students, those in Hackney were at the end of their years in the school and, without a 'Sixth Form' on site, the school did not offer a clear route into an immediate future identity. September 1992 was the first month of their last year of compulsory schooling and the taught unit was introduced only a few months before they would finish. A great deal has been written about young people positioned in this way, especially since the raising of the school leaving age in the early 1970s (see Bernstein, 1975; Willis, 1977 and 1990; Corrigan, 1979; Bates *et al*, 1984; Hollands, 1990; CCCS Education Group II, 1991). As these authors have shown, educational trajectories extending beyond compulsory schooling for students located as working-

class are likely to be, at best, fragile and may be the focus for active refusal (see, especially, Willis, 1977). Though I had not sought to investigate such trajectories, my data did provide evidence that this contrast between, broadly, working-class and middle-class orientations to 'educated futures' does still persist.

Being a student is a necessarily transitional identity and requires some sense of movement from one condition to another - to those more adult identities in which a past educational history is a necessary element. To be a student without some credible sense of the future to which it connects is merely to live out the duration of that identity; lacking such a future, most imagine other kinds of adult life. It has been argued by Willis (1977; 1990), that such futures are conceived through an engagement in informal culture of a kind marginal to life as a school student. Certainly, among some of those I interviewed, mainly though not exclusively boys, there was a marked distance from the prospective orientation of student identity and a restless impatience with time passed in classrooms. Both of the next two chapters illustrate this to some extent. In particular, it is evident that in the more working-class milieu of the Hackney school, the students did not make cultural capital out of their informal experience with the same sense of investment in the

self which became so apparent in the research with the Edmonton students.

However, the Hackney students, if mainly the girls, did make something out of the work they were asked to do and, in Chapter 5, I examine the texts they produced in some detail. So, to qualify Willis' view, I want to stress that working-class students negotiate routes through schooling, combining elements of what student identity entails with positions available in other cultural domains. Meanwhile, for the students in the more middle-class milieu of the suburban selective school, identities were still most often made, substantially, through their experience in education (though, for a contrasting perspective, see Aggleton, 1987). For the Edmonton students, 'adolescence' was certainly not just 'boring' but time invested. So, in this thesis, in devoting attention to classroom practice - to what students actually do in Media Studies - I am reaffirming the importance of schools as still significant, if variable, sites for the formation of young people's identities.

The scale of this research needs some clarification. It is a qualitative study of an aspect of classroom practice which is rare in British schools, if increasing with the relatively recent inclusion of popular music in GCSE Media Studies and in some A Level courses. The scope for comparison and

replication was very limited indeed. I worked with only a small number of students - a class of, at best, about seventeen in Hackney, of whom several participated in interviews and discussions. In Edmonton I worked with a class of about thirty but selected only a limited set of examples of their writing for detailed consideration. The Hackney study produced less data than I would have liked - though that, as I have noted, was itself a fact of some significance, and the Edmonton study produced rather more than I could include in this thesis without squeezing out the Hackney study. I wanted to keep data from both GCSE and A Level students in this thesis and, as my analysis of the data developed, it became essential to retain the contrast between students in a suburban, selective school and those in an inner city comprehensive.

I was in contact with the first group across a period of eleven months, beginning in the year when they were 15 and ending when they were 16. I was involved in 23 sessions with the Hackney group, 13 of those as a teacher. I saw the second group, in year 12 (16-17), across a period of three months but returned to talk to the group through into year 13. My direct involvement in taught sessions with them was possible on only 4 occasions but I was able to visit the school, and talk to their teachers, rather more frequently. But, however constrained, it was significant that only relatively brief

contact with this group was *necessary;* they provided me with substantial data within a matter of a few weeks. In retrospect, it was possible to re-interpret the more meagre data from Hackney precisely in terms of its paucity.

5. Methods

The period of my classroom research in Hackney began, in June 1992, with observation in Media Studies lessons with a year 10 class. I wanted to observe the kind of teaching the class were experiencing and how that might define the version of Media Studies with which they were becoming familiar. At first, I had little opportunity to speak to them either as a group or individually. I tended to find myself unlocated in terms of the social relationships which constituted the class as a group and the teacher as their teacher. I was uncertain about how to present my identity or purpose but, as I realized retrospectively, I was understood to be a teacher, *but not their teacher.* I found myself, therefore, without a position from which to engage their attention. I noted what I could, as an observer, but was increasingly aware that this was superficial, enabling me to record a series of impressions through which I could discern the teacher's priorities and typical modes of address and something of their self-organization as a class, their habits of talk and styles of engagement with the teacher, but not much more.

After observing several lessons, frustrated by the lack of opportunity to develop any sustained dialogue, I arranged to take out a small group to discuss my interest in music with them. When I did so, I was still uncertain of my identity-for-them and offered only a brief explanation of my interest in being there - recorded in my classroom notes thus:

> I want to ask some questions about music because it often gets left out of Media Studies courses and I'm trying to work out some ways of including it...

I recorded the discussion with them - a discussion which I kept alive by asking a number of preconceived questions about their knowledge of, and interests in, popular music (see the discussion of 'acid', above, and, later in this chapter, that of *Top of the Pops*). I subsequently recorded three individual interviews with members of the same group. This had the considerable advantage of alerting me to some variability in the kinds of statements they made in differently constituted social situations. Indeed, it was important to have statements made by the same individuals but in different situations and thus to be able to identify contrasts in their self-accounts and in their references to various kinds of music (see Appendix 1). So, I knew something of them in the classroom context to begin with; I was then able to record the way in which four of them together, away from the lesson, represented themselves and, further, to compare the responses of three of the four students when interviewed individually.

Subsequently, all of these individuals were also involved in the 'group evaluation' sessions in the Spring of 1993, when they were involved in discussions of the 'Music-Audience' unit taught earlier in that term (see Chapter 4). Furthermore, I was able to collect some observational data in both the Autumn and Spring Terms of 1992-1993 and, more importantly, to develop a detailed reading of their written assignments, produced during the first weeks of the Spring Term 1993. Across this variety of material, differences in the constitution of discussion situations, in the audiences for their talk and their writing, and in their precise location within the context of the school, allowed a sense of how 'tactical', of how socially embedded, their 'knowledge about music' might be. It was essential to keep in focus the institutional setting and the particular practice within which they spoke or wrote, and thus not to conceive my task as that of extracting just the verbal 'data' (a point of contrast with Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995). I made observational notes to accompany audiotaped sessions, noted exactly where they took place and at what stage in the unfolding sequence of teaching and assessment they occurred. Indeed, as I have suggested, my 'evidence' is not only the verbal 'data' - transcripts and students' writing - but also includes both knowledge as a teaching-participant in the classroom and discussions with the teachers more continuously involved with the students. I learnt, progressively, to

analyze the data as embedded in its school contexts, contexts which could not be bracketed out. But, as I noted earlier, I also learnt that my data included not just what my respondents said or wrote, but *my own engagement* with what students and teachers told me as it happened and my reflections upon it later. A part of my data is thus 'of myself' as a social actor, a particular self situated historically, in the events that I describe and analyze - and, of course, such data is also drawn from before the events (myself as adolescent, as teacher) and from after the events (in my reflections on doing research and my identity as a researcher).

When I returned to observe the class and to talk to them in the first term of year 11, the year in which they would all have their sixteenth birthdays, I had no secure sense of a continuing, active, relationship with the students. In the classroom context, I could not, as an adult, 'participate' with them; indeed, the same would have been even more apparent in virtually any other context. It became clear that I should abandon all my uncertain and awkward attempts to somewhat distance myself from the authority of their Head of English, do more to become their teacher, and thus locate my investigation in the relation between teacher and taught. In the Spring Term, the mid-point of their final year, I established myself as a co-teacher responsible for planning

and taking them into a unit of work specifically focused around music. This produced a much stronger sense of reciprocal engagement: I had to be there every time they had a Media Studies lesson; I had to address the class, help them with their work, know where to find things, give them permission to leave the room, read and respond to their writing. However, not all the consequences of becoming their teacher followed. Occasionally, when the Head of English was out of the room, they would take off into rows with each other, swearing profusely in a way which I never witnessed when their own teacher was present. And, throughout, I spoke as their teacher: even if they swore, I did not. Of course, taking this route, in the progressive focusing of my research, excluded other possibilities: I did not seek to become known as just an interested adult, some one they could speak to as other than a teacher (unlike, for example, Hey, 1997). Other kinds of data, of a more informal kind, were thus excluded, rather than sought after, in the most substantial phase of my research. From some vantage points, this is a limitation but, within a single site, and as an individual researcher, it would not have been possible to pursue such a different, and additional, route.

I kept copies of all that the Hackney group produced as work for assessment. Such work, it should be emphasised, was also a production of research data and was an invaluable

means to explore issues of self-representation not accessible through talk alone (see Sefton-Green, in Buckingham, 1993b: p.138). Their projects, discussed in Chapter 5, provided the most substantial data from the class. Having explored both the pedagogic and the research limitations of talk, I carried out the research in Edmonton with the production of written data as the central objective. But, as I have suggested, rather than work within the limits of existing practice in Media Studies, I invited the A Level students to write autobiographically about six music tracks of their choice. This task was inserted into a block of teaching focused on popular music and the production of pop videos. However, the writing they were asked to do was not for formal assessment and was thus much more of an 'experiment' than anything I asked the Hackney students to do. The detail of this project is discussed in Chapter 6. So, the evolving shape of the research involved a taught unit in Hackney, conceived within the limits of existing practice in Media Studies, followed by a further project in Edmonton, located within work on pop music, but seeking to make some innovation in the 'normal' practice of A Level Media Studies teaching.

6. Analytic Procedures

In this section, I want to clarify the relationship between 'interpretation' and 'analysis'. These terms are less than satisfactory, but they are the familiar currency of debates

around methods and methodology and can be used to stand for what seem to be provisionally distinguishable phases of much the same process. Beyond this, I also want to comment on the status of my analysis of the students' words and the relation between that analysis and the students' own pre-interpretations (see the discussion of Thompson below).

I always transcribed the whole of each interview and each discussion that I recorded. I didn't make a predetermined selection of moments on the basis of the themes that were my interest. It was important to transcribe everything because I wanted to read the text thus produced as a representation of a whole event. My approach has therefore emphasised the relation between speakers in a particular school setting and through the time of a distinctive occasion. The transcripts have often enabled me to recover speech I did not hear or could not remember and, inevitably, these texts have tended to stand in for the real event of which they are just one, limited, document. Nevertheless, my own memory of these events has invariably informed my reading even if such memory was largely of the way the occasion 'felt', rather than of the details of what was said. The transcripts represent dialogues in which the speakers have interpreted the contexts, the questions and the issues, and have spoken accordingly. Evidence of the work of interpretation, involving all those present, is partially inscribed in the

words recorded and transcribed. To some extent, I have tried to identify, through such evidence, how the students understood the situation and their positions within it. I was inevitably making such interpretations within the time of each event but, of course, I have also devoted much more time to the task of retrospective interpretation. I have read and listened repeatedly to an event which, for those others involved, had only its one unique time. I have read these events *for my particular purposes*. The conditions of my retrospective interpretation are thus radically different from those available to the other participants: the enlargement of time, repetition, and transcription have combined to allow me a special kind of interpretative relation to these events. In effect, they became texts for me to read and, importantly, to discuss with others - the teachers and, sometimes, the students themselves.[17] Much of this applies also to the written texts produced by both the Hackney and the Edmonton students. Whereas school writing is typically read for assessment, once or twice and quite rapidly, I returned to their writing repeatedly and read it for purposes clearly far broader than the need to assess.

My analytic procedures, though prefigured in the questions I chose to pursue, and thus not strictly separable from 'interpretation', have nevertheless evolved through the time of the research. I have thus read and interpreted data

collected in, for example, July 1992 in a variety of ways across five years. Such a process of reanalysis is always of data already read, already, to some extent, interpreted. Of course, the adoption of different modes of discursive analysis does not leave interpretation as it was and, over a period of months, even years, my interpretation has changed in relation to the analytical perspectives I have encountered. I want to introduce an example here, taken from the discussion (with Alan, Asiye, Margaret and Stephen) recorded in July 1992, and from which I have already cited the 'acid' exchange. The following example is discussed in Appendix 1 (a revised version of the preliminary analysis written in 1992). In the discussion I had asked a question about what music the students disliked and, as Stephen and Alan offered Erasure as an example, Alan had added 'You see them on *Top of the Pops*'. I followed this, wanting to identify sources of 'knowledge about music', with questions about 'how they find out about' music, suggesting that television was not likely to be a good source. In response, they said more about *Top of the Pops*. However, in (re)analyzing this data, I did not focus on what they said as evidence about the place of music in the students' everyday lives but attended more to the social purposes of the 'information' they gave in the negotiation of the discussion as an institutionally situated event. Thus, though I had thought of the four students as a 'group', it was necessary

to render this problematic - in what senses, other than the most descriptively obvious, did they act as a group at all? To address this question, I turned to a study by Jordin and Brunt (1988) in which they argue that:

> Rather than emphasising what groups represent...it might be better to concentrate on what groups do...A possible objection...is that by focusing on the group in its own right one thereby loses the connection with...broad social structural factors like class...
> We would argue...that this is only a problem if one insists on thinking of class as a 'thing' exercising some external effect on another 'thing' - the group. (Jordin and Brunt, 1988: p.240)

With this in mind, I adopted an analytical procedure which refocused my interpretation of the data. I moved from thinking of the four students as *representing* 'adolescents', or GCSE students, with an informal experience of music to which I was seeking to gain access, to thinking about the terms in which they constituted themselves as a group (or not). It was thus possible to analyze the data as evidence of their active self-construction in their encounter with myself as an adult and a teacher, and with each other as individuals selected to be my 'respondents'. As I argue in Appendix 1, they constituted themselves as a group only momentarily and, in this instance, by constructing a common distance from *Top of the Pops*. Indeed the programme seemed to be a kind of 'stock item' in a repertoire upon which they could draw in order to define what they were not:

> Margaret: On TV they end up playing what they wanna hear like on *Top of the Pops*, they don't

play...people, they play things like what they want us, what they want people to like...
Alan: That's what they want, it's not what we want
Margaret: yeah
Stephen: Yeah it's true
Margaret:...try like to make us like it but no one likes it...
CR:...yeah but isn't it already on *Top of the Pops* because it's sold I don't know x number of copies?
Margaret: Yeah but *Top of the Pops* is trying to be for people our age and people older but people our age and older just don't like that sort of music really...
CR: So how old...
Margaret: The majority of people...it's normally younger kids who listen to that sort of music...
CR: So what age of people do you think watch *Top of the Pops*...7, 8? What do you think?
Stephen: I watch it
Stephen/Margaret: Everyone watches it...

My argument here is that they constitute themselves as 'adolescent' in this exchange by constructing an implicitly adult 'they' against a momentary 'us'/'we': what are the referents for these pronouns? Is 'they' generalizable to all adults? Is 'they' the BBC? Are the students thus drawing upon that familiar discourse in which the BBC has been charged with misaddressing young people with moralistic and aesthetically prescriptive intent? Whatever the case, tactically their claim to be misaddressed enables them to do 'being adolescent', locating themselves as a 'we' who are neither children ('people our age and older') nor adults, but united in being misunderstood, mistargeted as 'they' go on getting it wrong. Whether or not they do watch *Top of the Pops*, that they nevertheless say that they do in the context of this discussion suggests the tactical importance of the

programme in sustaining the context of their difference, from myself and from other adults. It is worth noting that, again, I speak here within the constraints of self-presentation as a media teacher rather than, as I might have done, recalling much the same combination of disdain with compulsive interest through the 1960s or the sense of excitement at an exceptional moment when Jimi Hendrix performed 'Hey Joe' on the programme in 1967.

A further possible accenting of their 'they', in this exchange, in addition to the generality of its reference to 'adults', may lie in the history of the BBC as a middle class (Reithian) institution, and a popular endorsement of commercial television dating from the 1950s (Corner, 1991; Strinati and Wagg, 1992). Given such a history, it is possible to suggest that here they constitute themselves not just as 'adolescents' but as also located in terms of class difference, perhaps, implicitly, as 'working-class' or of 'the people'. However, as will be apparent through Chapters 4, 5 and 6, there is no simple sense in which these students necessarily *sustain* their identities as 'representatives' of such social categories.

The concept of 'multiaccentuality' points to the complexity of meanings enacted in the utterance of even single, and apparently plain, words. 'Acid', in the example discussed

earlier in this chapter, was clearly located at the point of intersection of participants' differing social interests (Volosinov, 1973; Bakhtin, 1994). Sometimes, such interests have seemed immediate and tactical, at others to be indicative of more enduring social differences; often, of course, both have combined in the same moment, as the reference to 'they' in the discussion of *Top of the Pops* appears to suggest. My analysis of discourse in such educational settings has also been informed by perspectives which have made the issue of power central. Kress, for example, has suggested that education is about 'the processes of classification, repositioning individuals with respect to potent social/cultural classificatory systems' (Kress, 1985). From this point of view, I have attempted to attend particularly to those moments in which the relationship between informal 'classificatory systems' and those formally validated by schools became apparent in the students' negotiations of either a written task or of a dialogue with myself. It has been essential, therefore, to have *both* data derived from talk and from the more formal, specifically educational, practice of writing (Kress, 1994).

A further dimension of analysis, but one which suggests the insufficiency of the term, has been pursued through the process of reinscribing the students' words in this thesis. Of course, much analytical work has preceded the production

of this text but 'reinscription' suggests the larger process of 'remaking' the discourse of others to serve different purposes. Their words are thus relocated, and their meanings incorporated in what is itself an extended discursive act. However, this is the case in any work of re-presentation and I don't regard this 'incorporation' as also a dis-authentification. Their words, spoken or written, were always also particular discursive acts, not 'testimonies of the self'. I am not suggesting, therefore, that this thesis is the culmination of a process in which self-expressive utterances are alienated from their speakers. To the contrary, language, spoken or written, to whomever it may be addressed, is always both less and more than an expression of the self; it always fails to express and to fix who we are, even if we think we want it to achieve that purpose (cf. Bakhtin, 1994: pp.89-100).[18] Thus, in my analysis, I do not take words just as testimony, as simply the voiced truth of either past or present identities.

I have emphasised that my reading of both transcripts and written assignments has depended on knowledge of the setting and the social relations peculiar to it. The question I want to address now is that of the status of my analysis in relation to the participants' own interpretations. To do so, I want to refer to a discussion of methodology provided by John B. Thompson in *Ideology and Modern Culture* (Thompson,

1990). He makes a substantial case for 'depth hermeneutics', arguing that 'the object domain of social-historical inquiry is a *pre-interpreted domain* in which processes of understanding and interpretation take place as a routine part of the everyday lives of the individuals who, in part, make up this domain' (Thompson, 1990: p.21). As one moment in a more elaborate structure of ideological analysis, Thompson advocates attention to the interpretations produced by participants in their own social worlds. Thus, studies which seek to represent the past might resort to the methods of oral history (cf. Humphries, 1981; Bertaux, 1981) and, in contemporary settings, attention to participants' pre-interpretations demands some form of 'ethnographic' enquiry:

> By means of interviews, participant observation and other kinds of ethnographic research, we can reconstruct the ways in which symbolic forms are interpreted and understood in the varied contexts of social life. Of course, this reconstruction is itself an interpretative process; it is an interpretation of everyday understanding...an *interpretation of doxa*, an interpretation of the opinions, beliefs and understandings which are held and shared by the individuals who comprise the social world. (Thompson, 1990: p.279).

Thompson insists that in re-interpreting a pre-interpreted domain we are 'engaging in a process which can, by its very nature, give rise to a conflict of interpretations' (Thompson, 1990: pp.22-3). Indeed, Thompson argues that the 'interpretation of ideology is depth hermeneutics with a critical intent', the aim to disclose 'meaning in the service

of power' (Thompson, 1990: p.23). In producing interpretations of ideology:

> ...we are putting forward an interpretation which may diverge from the everyday understanding of the individuals who make up the social world. The interpretation of ideology may enable individuals to see symbolic forms differently, in a new light, and thereby to see themselves differently. It may enable them to re-interpret a symbolic form...to question or revise their prior understanding of a symbolic form, and thereby to alter the horizons of their understanding of themselves and others. (Thompson, 1990: p.25).

In the process of enquiring into identity, or into the uses made of media forms, the practice of research itself, in so far as it produces different interpretations from those produced by research subjects themselves, might therefore contribute to changes in self-understanding. However, this more 'political' outcome is exceptionally difficult to specify in any particular practice. Thompson's general case is presented hypothetically:

> *The depth interpretation becomes a potential intervention in the very circumstances about which it is formulated.* A depth interpretation is itself a symbolic construction, capable in principle of being understood by the subjects enmeshed in the circumstances which form in part the object of interpretation. As an interpretation which may differ from their own everyday understanding, the depth interpretation may enable them *to see themselves differently*; it may enable them to re-interpret a symbolic form in relation to the circumstances of its production and reception...(Thompson, 1990: p.323).

In fact, there is no path, solely through theory, beyond this reiteration of 'potential', of plausibility 'in principle'.

Moreover, Thompson recognizes that the practical obstacles to 'potential intervention' are 'numerous, formidable'. However, there are important reasons, arising from within these larger political ambitions, to consider the 'ethnographic moment', or, in my research, the 'classroom moment', not as one from which to move on but rather as one from within which to explore the relationship between those interpretations produced by a researcher and those shared, or otherwise, by the other participants. Doing empirical research and, in particular, specifying the relation of researcher to participants can help to situate Thompson's highly abstracted formulations. For myself, it was clear that as an adult observer and subsequently as a teacher, I necessarily entered into a set of overdetermined relationships from which I could hardly extract myself or the young people to whom I spoke. To offer 'interpretations' independent of such a particular set of relationships was, of course, impossible. Thompson says '...an interpretation which is plausible may stimulate a process of critical self-reflection among subjects who, as actors capable of deliberation, may regard the interpretation as plausible and worthy of recognition' (Thompson, 1990: p.324). But it is the specificity of the social relations in which this might occur which shape that possibility.

Unfortunately, I was not able to return to the Hackney class at the stage when I had produced an analysis of their

writing; unlike several of the students in Edmonton (see Appendix 3), they had no opportunity to read what I had written. Nevertheless, in the course of my research, interpretations, my own and those of everyone else involved, were thick on the ground - and by that I mean that 'interpretations' did not stand as abstracted sets of propositions but were made by, and from, all the various positions sustained by located social actors, in this case in the school classroom and other, adjacent, areas. Difference, or conflict, between interpretations cannot be understood in isolation from the social interests pursued by the various members of the class and by myself in the particular institutional settings that we occupied. 'Interpretation' is a part of social practices, tactical, multivalent and somewhat provisional.

To suggest the complexity of interpretation, and to reaffirm the importance of reading my data as multiaccentual, it may be helpful at this point to outline in brief just one example which is drawn into my argument in Chapter 4. The question is that of how the participants in this context 'interpret' ragga, a relatively recent development in Jamaican music. My own interpretation of ragga was, though not voiced explicitly, neither singular nor coherent: I could have said I liked the sound and found its 'Jamaican' characteristics enjoyably familiar but that it also seemed,

lyrically and iconographically, and in the larger context of pop, mostly a matter of male sexual boasts and misogyny. In the classroom, there was little overtly interpretative discussion of ragga. However, one of the 'group evaluation' sessions, in this case with the girls, provided a context in which quite specific criticisms of some ideological elements in ragga culture were voiced:

> CR: Do girls listen to ragga very much...as much as boys?
> Margaret: Yeah...boys take it in more...I mean generally boys are more listening to the messages of the song...
> CR: Which are what?
> Margaret: It's like 'Oh yeah girls pum pum went did this shot a man blah blah blah girl's a bitch' all that but boys, boys listen to that more than girls and think of it like more 'this is serious, this is the way I feel blah blah blah' more than girls do
> CR: I mean I've not heard much ragga...
> Margaret: Girls like the music, I like the music, I don't like some of the messages that it's putting across to young boys...when I say young boys I'm not trying to sound like a grown up, they're more my age but...[ ] influenced by it
> Gemma: There's one, there's one ragga song that puts across a message about gambling and having to go out and shoot all of them and I don't think that's a very nice thing to be putting across
> Margaret: Ragga's are really anti-gay...[Yeah...] and like no respect for girls really...no respect for any woman except for their mums really (laughter)...it's fashionable to respect their mum but no one else, it's true

Ragga was, though valued for some aspects of its musical form, sharply criticised for its antipathy towards gays and its arrogance in relation to women. The kind of dialogue that was produced in that context, where girls without boys could

present themselves to other girls and to myself, as an 'interested' teacher, could be read as evidence of their pre-existing subject positions and their already critical engagement with ragga as one genre in their currently familiar repertoire. They selectively dismantled and re-presented this particular 'symbolic resource' from an implicitly feminist position. Equally, the statement of such criticisms in the context of a recorded discussion could be seen as a way of securing some educational credibility where, they might have known, anti-sexism is an institutionally legitimated discourse. But also, because they are girls in school, it may be that they found it more difficult to acknowledge and criticize their position, as young, as female, as school students, in relation to myself as a middle-aged, male, 'teacher' than they did to challenge the popular forms around which teacherly anxieties and interventions are so often seen to converge. Ragga might thus have become an object around which, through an act of public interpretation, a particular competence in a critical discursive practice could be safely displayed. Thus, it is possible that in voicing one oppositional interpretation of a 'masculinist' ideology, they were simultaneously enacting their acquiescence in other ideological relations. Of course, in terms of Thompson's interpretative schema, much more elaborated discussion and investigation should follow, both in teaching and research. But my point here is that the

social contexts of interpretative work, in this case the conduct of a 'group evaluation' session with four girls convened by myself as a male teacher, are fundamental to social actors' negotiation of such tasks.

7. Conclusion

In this concluding section, I want to consider, if briefly, the distance between 'spontaneous' and 'scientific' concepts (Vygotsky, 1962). As I have noted, the modes of enquiry which I pursued were framed by the classroom context and located in the institutional relation between teacher and taught. Some discussions tended towards explanation in terms which were reasonably clear to me - as if the formality of the context and my authority as a teacher elicited some effort to display a movement from 'spontaneous' to 'scientific' concepts, however uncertain (see Margaret's contributions in Chapter 4). However, I cannot claim to have data which provides any reassuring evidence of the dialectic of conceptual understanding suggested by Vygotsky. For example, a word such as 'taste', an 'ordinary' word in most students' vocabulary, and a term which I sometimes made a more deliberate focus of attention, was not easy to 'remake' in dialogue. As a 'spontaneous' concept 'taste' seemed to have a mainly common sense set of meanings, suggesting preferences which were natural and ordinary features of individual personalities. There was perhaps some potential in my discussions with the

students (see especially Chapter 4) to develop a relation between 'taste' as a common-sense or spontaneous concept and 'taste' as a scientific concept, as a key term in Bourdieu's cultural analysis, for example. But, as will be apparent in the following chapters, between teacher and taught, in institutional circumstances productive of fleeting and truncated encounters, it was never possible to achieve the sustained and reflective dialogue which might support such a development.

In moving my research from a GCSE class in a comprehensive without a 'Sixth Form' to an A Level Media Studies class in a selective school, I was able to explore other ways of working with informal knowledge in very different circumstances. Of course, this exploration was still located in the institutional encounter between teacher and taught but, in some respects, the students were placed in a different relation to my enquiries. In Edmonton, the A Level students took up my invitation to write about their music in terms which suggested how accustomed and how committed they were to that transformation of informal experience into cultural capital. They 'invested'[19] their informal knowledge in the educational context, 'knowing' tacitly that there it would acquire a value, a value to be reinvested in themselves and their futures. In Hackney, there were few students, with some exceptions, who had an interest in using my research as a

means to any comparable accumulation and investment of their informal and transient knowledge in the school context. This overarching contrast justifies and, broadly, frames the comparisons developed through the next three chapters. Indeed, across both schools, my analysis has tended to employ concepts derived more from Bourdieu's 'market' metaphors than from Vygotsky's somewhat rationalist theory of learning (cf. Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994: p.150-3). Nevertheless, there is a tension between these theoretical repertoires which persists in the following account. From Bourdieu, it is difficult to derive any sense of a practice not already compromised by an underlying logic of social division. From Vygotsky, there is a more hopeful perspective upon the relation between teaching and learning which, however abstract, is thus more likely to inform the work that teachers do with their students (see Burgess, 1984). Indeed, Vygotsky has provided a vocabulary for teachers seeking to define their practice in terms of enagagement and support (or 'scaffolding') rather than either transmission or mere facilitation (see Buckingham, 1990).

I want to reiterate, finally, that the logic of the following chapters is primarily pedagogic - they explore the problems and the possibilities of teaching which engages with popular music in media education and do so through research located entirely in the relation between teacher and taught.

What follows is an examination of data produced in encounters between myself as a teacher and groups of GCSE and A Level Media Studies students.

Notes

1. Much of the data collected through interviews with teachers has been left out of this thesis and will be included in a book examining the life-histories of Media Studies teachers. It is provisionally entitled: *'The cool thing to do': the making of media teachers.*

2. If 'focusing' is thought of as a metaphor derived from photography, it is possible to use it to suggest more intricate comparison with other closely inter-related aspects of that practice: framing and reframing, selecting lenses of varying focal lengths, varying depth of field (etc). See Lakoff and Johnson, 1980.

3. I would like to thank Janet Maw for making this point in her comments on an earlier draft of the thesis.

4. Pollard comments: 'As I look back on it now, it seems surprising that I did not consider a form of 'action research'. I was aware of the Ford Teaching Project and Lawrence Stenhouse had just published his *Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development* (1975) with its powerful advocacy to teachers that they should research on their own classrooms as a means of professional and curriculum development. Happily the action research movement has grown in strength over the years since then...but at the time it did not provide for me the same sense of excitement that ethnography did.' (Pollard, 1985: p.218)

5. I did not seek access to knowledge of the students from beyond the teacher-student relation and was thus, on the whole, acting in terms consistent with my self-positioning as a teacher, knowing the students as teachers know them. The evident disjunction between what I knew of myself and what I knew of the students is suggestive of the fleeting, abbreviated and delimited character of teacher-student relations in schools where teachers routinely encounter up to 150 students in a week (Five classes of 30 students, for example). Of course, teachers present in a school for several years may accumulate, and develop, further knowledge of *some* students, but this is likely to be uneven and uncertain.

6. See Green and Bloome, forthcoming.

7. For example, as recorded in my journal (which I refer to as 'classroom notes'):

'---- talking about <u>roots</u>, about how we (sixties/seventies people) were introduced to the roots of the music we listened to (Stones - Blues) but the kids here don't know anything

beyond the immediate, even when the apparently immediate includes unmodified borrowing from the past.

She also said quite a lot about how music is embedded in the personal - in particular personal histories - how it's strongly tied into memories of people, places, clothes, drugs...for her

- worth doing an interview with her...prepare...' (6.1.93)

In an interview with Richard (3.3.94) he commented: '...the contribution that black musicians have made y'know which is often not, they don't know about...I think some of that might be interesting, a kind of straightforward historical kind of input...not least because I know bugger all about popular modern music...I felt very alien somehow' and '...I think I'd want to address the idea of...a selective history of what gets left out of account...I mean it's interesting that a current advert's...my little son who's 9, for Christmas wanted tapes of, wanted a Beethoven tape, blues and jazz tapes and this seems to have been because, is it Budweiser? have been using, is it John Lee Hooker? and the Heineken one...his little friend has picked this up because his dad is into it, so it's actually become a recognized category for him and the two of them had exactly the same independently made up, the two had the same Christmas shopping lists and y'know we then bought him a, a ghetto blaster which he wasn't expecting at all and he actually does sit there listening to jazz or y'know Muddy Waters and he really seems to enjoy it...which absolutely left me gobsmacked y'know but he really seems to like it...'

8. See Bernstein (1975), 'Class and pedagogies: visible and invisible', in *Class, Codes and Control*, vol.3.

9. Unexpectedly, I spent the last days of the Spring Term 1993 in hospital and thus lost some opportunities to catch up with people I had missed earlier.

10. My curiosity about ethnography goes back to the very early 1970s and reading such books as *Soulside* (Hannerz, 1969). It was pursued, somewhat traumatically, through a period of about seven months in a Japanese village in 1976, alongside my wife who was doing extended research (about 14 months) in the mode of traditional anthropological field-work.

11. Hirst (1993) comments: 'Practical knowledge is acquired by living within the organised social world to which we

belong, structured as it is by institutions and traditions of great variety. In education, as in any other area of activity, we come to understand the activity, its problems and their answers from engagement in the activity itself. We have to penetrate the idiom of the activity by practising it. Then, gradually, by a variety of means, we can improve and extend our knowledge of how to pursue it, analysis of the activity and reflection on its rules and principles having their part to play in that process'. (p.153) In what sense participants *understand* their activity is, of course, a more complex and uncertain matter than this seems to imply. See Hammersley (1993), 'On the teachers as researcher', in the same collection.

12. I have borrowed this phrase from Brian Street who spoke on the topic of academic literacies at the University of North London, June 6th 1996. For some critical comments on the 'ethnographic claim' in the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, see Connell (1983). See also Radway (1988), especially p.367.

13. See Morley (1992); Walkerdine in Burgin, Donald and Kaplan (1986); Buckingham (1990); Buckingham (1993b) and Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994).

14. For example, borrowing music genre categories from music journalism in order to devise questions for 15/16 year olds rather than working only with the categories already current among them is a heuristic tactic typical in teaching Media Studies but, clearly, highly dubious as a method ethnographic enquiry.

15. In this respect, I agree with Hammersley's argument for *combining* teacher-practitioner and academic researcher perspectives: '...I do not believe that being an established participant in a situation provides access to valid knowledge that is not available to an outside researcher. In general, the chances of the findings being valid can be enhanced by a judicious combination of involvement and estrangement.' (Hammersley, 1993: p.219).

16. See Clifford and Marcus (1986) for the debate around the textual representation of others in anthropology; see also Harding (1991) for a feminist critique of traditional epistemology and the case for 'standpoint' theory.

17. This was possible with several of the students in Edmonton.

18. Two psychoanalytically informed perspectives can be cited here, though I have chosen not to pursue a psychoanalytic approach to the analysis of the data in this thesis:

'When we speak, we take up a position of identity and certainty in language, a position whose largely fictional nature only the occasional slip, and at times the joke, is allowed to reveal...' (Rose, 1984: p.15).

'...social agents are not capable of being fully rational and disinterested; and they are subjects split between the conscious and unconscious and among multiple social positionings.' (Ellsworth, 1989: p.316).

19. Bourdieu (1986) comments, of teachers: '...the *specific* profits, and the consequent propensities to invest, are only defined in the relationship between a field and a particular agent with particular characteristics. For example, those who owe most of their cultural capital to the educational system, such as primary and secondary teachers originating from the working and middle classes, are particularly subject to the academic definition of legitimacy, and tend to proportion their investments very strictly to the value the educational system sets on the different areas.' (p.87)

Chapter 4: Transient, Tactical, Knowledge

> *CR: Right so there's not one kind of music that you decide you're gonna stick to?*
> *Jamie: No 'cause you can say 'Oh well Alan likes the Housemartins' (much laughter) but then there might be a song that he don't like*
> *Paul: ...and then he doesn't like the Housemartins*

Introduction

In this chapter I want to present extracts from the 'group evaluations' conducted in the Spring of 1993, as part of the taught unit on 'Music-Audience', itself a component in the students' GCSE Media Studies course work. As I have argued, through the progressive focusing of my research, I chose to locate my enquiry in the relation between teacher and taught and to attend, therefore, to the uneasy exchanges between such institutionally situated actors. Though not, at the time of the research, a secondary school teacher, I relocated myself somewhat in the position I once occupied but in order to investigate a topic, pop music, which, in the 1980s, I had never attempted to teach. In thus relocating myself, I also chose to replicate some aspects of that circumscribed, abbreviated and interrupted, relation between teacher and taught which, as a full-time classroom teacher, I had found such an awkward context for any kind of dialogue around features of the students' informal culture.[1]

I have chosen the extracts in this chapter to illustrate some of the awkwardness, and the complexity, of the discussions I recorded. The chapter thus documents an *attempt* to talk about music, in the context provided by a 'group evaluation', but with a particular phase of classroom work as a focus. Towards the end of the period in which the class worked through a 'pop music' assignment, I extracted four girls and four boys, and conducted separate discussions with them. The sessions took place in the English Department's office.

The inter-related questions of 'adolescence' and identity, and of musical taste, are located here through a central contrast between the positions taken up by boys and by girls. The degree of gendered division within this class (recorded in my classroom notes) emerged more strongly in this material than in the earlier interviews (see Appendix 1). The discussions were set up in terms consistent with their self-organization in the classroom: almost invariably in distinct groups, girls on one side, boys on the other, as I had noted in my classroom observations throughout the period from June 1992 onwards (cf. Thorne, 1993). Furthermore, the discussions were events of an 'unrepeatable' kind, internal to the particular process of teaching and evaluation through which I was able to form a working relationship with the students. They were not autonomous 'research events' but were embedded

in their continuing work for their GCSE in Media Studies. It would have been very difficult, therefore, to ask the students to do them again and thus give up time already allocated to other aspects of the course. However, as I have argued, the logic of my research was, precisely, to operate within such institutional constraints.

It is important to visualize the discussions - with myself present as a teacher and with a tape-recorder placed centrally amongst us. I asked one of the group to hold the microphone and, to some extent, to take up a 'mediating' position between myself and the others. Certainly this helped to give the groups some sense of a discussion among themselves but the questions and their sequence (see Appendix 2) were still my responsibility and I acted very much as a teacher, intent upon sustaining discussion. Despite this, and especially with the boys, the form of the event was often conversational, frequently departing from or elaborating around the prepared questions. These are discussions of a very particular kind and must be read as offering only partial, provisional and fragmented evidence of the students' knowledge of music. Their knowledge was elusive and seemed mostly a transient phenomenon, tactically orientated to the circumstances of the discussion. At times, I felt that the meanings of music for the students could not be recorded through responses in which conscious elaboration had much

place (cf. Thomas, 1993: p.78). Sometimes, the significance of musical references seemed to be registered in silences and refusals or in moments of derision and laughter. I argue, therefore, that in the practice of media teaching, there is a need to explore a wide variety of ways of engaging with popular musical knowledge rather than assume that 'talk', of the kind typically involved in group evaluations, will enable students to articulate what they know. In common with recent arguments for 'practical work' in media education (Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994; Buckingham, Grahame and Sefton-Green, 1995), I see discussions of the kind represented here as just one moment in a developing practice which is necessarily tentative, operating at the troublesome boundary between informal and formal knowledge.

It has been argued that, often, 'adolescents are over-impressed by the inquisitive attention of adults such as researchers and like to be seen to have "opinions" and to debate as adults have opinions and debate' (Hewitt, 1986: p.7). To some extent, this tendency is apparent in the extracts discussed below (see, especially, Margaret's contributions) but, here, their self-presentation was framed by a model of 'evaluation' and their negotiation of my involvement as a teacher rather than a researcher. On the whole, they did not aspire to (middle-class) models of adult debate and, to the contrary, took up various positions as

'adolescents', as 'pupils', as gendered and classed subjects and as participants in youth culture.

There was a tension between the formality of the event, an 'evaluation', and, for them, the immediate social currency of musical reference. What the occasion, and my questions, required was a reflection on the classroom work they had been doing but, clearly, to speak of popular music could not be separated from its tactical significance in positioning themselves among their peers. The (precarious) division of 'private' social relations from the 'public' context of the classroom could not be sustained. The girls spoke to each other of their parents or families or of specific friends in common, and thus some sense of how music was implicated in their lived social relations became more present in the discussion. But this did not involve any more elaborated description, any more explicit referencing of the music. On the contrary, it was referred to that much more implicitly and entirely within the terms of the particular social relations within which it seemed embedded. This, though marked by a greater display of levity, was also evident among the boys. What they could tell me, and what emerged in their discussions, was never 'of music' abstracted from the continuing negotiation of the immediate social context.

It follows from these observations that the voicing of tastes in these sessions was, to some degree, a matter of tactical positioning within the specific form of the event (cf. Jordin and Brunt, 1988; Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995). Tastes, often understood to be fixed, natural and discrete are indeed peculiar and puzzling, not easy to explain in any terms. It is no surprise that tastes are exceptionally difficult to disentangle from the lived social reality, and the lived sense of self, in which they are embedded. Despite this, a social theory of tastes, one which challenges their apparent idiosyncrasy, can provide ways of grasping at least one of their dimensions - the logic of tastes in particular social fields. The work of Bourdieu, notably *Distinction* (1986), provides the most elaborated theory of 'taste' as a matter of location within relations between classes and class fractions and thus constantly undercuts any claim that preferences are purely 'personal'. To the contrary, in Bourdieu's terms, to express a taste is to situate the self in a particular, socially differentiated, field of relations. In my own borrowing of Bourdieu's argument, the identities staked out through the expression of tastes need to be understood as socially tactical: particular claims to 'fixity' or 'naturalness' might thus serve relational purposes. In what follows, tastes are implicated in marking out boundaries but, in other ways, they contribute to allegiance, to the experience of subjectivity as a shared

domain, rather than as individual, quirky, isolating. Tastes in music are perhaps peculiarly powerful, constructed as one of the more emotive means through which, in the transitions from child to adult, relations to others are negotiated and redefined (see McClary, 1991). In these discussions, therefore, the expression of tastes is not taken to be simply a 'truth' about the speaker but is seen as, at least in part, a negotiation of possible positions within the particular social dynamics of the event, and within the microcultural politics of 'adolescent' gender relations.

To conclude this introduction, I want to emphasise that without access to specific forms of music education, talk about music can appear simplistic, descriptively vague in the sense that the experience of form and sound will be allocated to a limited set of categories, often presented as binary opposites: bass or treble, fast or slow (for a recent wide-ranging discussion, see Frith, 1996). It is still the case that where formal vocabularies are available, they are closely associated with reading music and with instruction in 'serious' music and therefore will be unlikely to enter discourse around popular music (but see the innovative work of McClary, 1991, on Madonna, for example). But whatever ways of speaking about music are regarded as legitimate in the formal context of education, the informal domain does not require a discourse about music which might represent it and

secure its place at that level of 'official' cultural legitimation. Furthermore, in informal contexts, between knowing participants in the culture, description is largely redundant, the detail of difference left implicit in the vocabulary of generic distinctions. Here, the students' words are mostly those of popular discourses, borrowed and reinflected in exchanges between them. Sometimes, seemingly orientated more towards my presence, they repeat the words through which I have asked the question or the words they have heard from other teachers and by which they can position themselves as 'good' (or not) (see Bakhtin, 1988; 1994).

A Music-Audience Assignment

It was my intention to explore their engagement with music through the teaching of a unit of work based on producing publicity materials for a new 'artist'. In the process, I hoped that they would gain a more explicit understanding of the knowledge which they had already acquired in informal contexts. The unit of work began with a brief exploratory task through which they could find out something of their fellow students' musical tastes. It was followed by the presentation of several images gleaned from fashion magazines (see Chapter 5: *Figures 1-7*), though subsequently cropped and photocopied to somewhat disguise their source. In fact, in much of the work that I did with them, these images became the principal object of their fascination and of our

discussion. Their immediate presence as a classroom 'text', and the students' previous learning of a Media Studies vocabulary orientated towards the description and analysis of the visual, made discussion appear easy and secure. As I argue in the next chapter, in Media Studies such discussions are likely to be centred in the now familiar, if not unproblematic, practice of 'image-analysis' (see Barthes, 1972; 1977; Gauthier, undated; Buckingham, 1990). It was of some importance to them to appear competent in this practice, but to speak of music was not what they had been taught to do. In Green's (1988) terms, we were thus all more at ease with a focus on 'delineated' rather than 'inherent' meanings.

The unit of work served two main purposes. It was necessary to devise something which would resemble the work with which they were familiar. It was essential that assessable outcomes be available at the completion of the assignment; these were the students' last few months in school and their GCSE exams were a significant preoccupation. In fact, the unit was closely based on one already devised by a new teacher in the department, a former English and Media PGCE student at the Institute of Education. What I planned was thus intended to emulate current practice in media education; it was not a research tactic conceived discretely for the 'elicitation of data'. Initially, I asked the students to read a set of questions around the use of popular music and, after some

rewriting, to 'interview' other students around the school to answer them. The questions were adopted by the group with few modifications. Some did emphasise particular questions, adding one or two significant new enquiries: 'Is there a type of music which you find offensive?' and 'Do you ever use drugs to enhance music?'. In this instance, Margaret's own strongly linked preoccupations with dress, dance, drugs and music informed an intensity of interest in the issue of music and cultural identity which was, if anything, somewhat frustrated by the particular form of the assignment demanded of the group.

The presentation of the initial assignment outline took the following form:

GCSE Media Studies - Spring Term 1993

Year 11: A Music-Audience Assignment
This assignment has two main stages. The first involves finding out what you can about the people that might buy a record by a new artist. The second involves producing the publicity materials through which the new artist is to be promoted. So what you have to do is this:

First: read through the survey questionnaire. It was written by teachers interested in finding out more about the music that their pupils listen to. Your job is to rewrite and redesign it as a survey which you can carry out with people of your own age. Your aim is to get information that will help you decide how best to launch a new artist.

Each of you will need to interview five people. Responses to your questions will be shared and discussed within your group.

Second: You have to choose one artist from the images provided. You need to think how to present and publicize this artist for an audience of people in the age band from 15 up to, say, 20. You will have already considered the most

popular sources of information for new music and how best to place an artist so that he or she is heard and seen by the right age group.

Here you have to produce the following materials:
1. A title for a new single and a design for the sleeve.
2. An advert for the artist's forthcoming album, video and tour.
3. A review of the album for a well known publication.
4. A storyboard for a promotional video.

In addition, you will have to complete an evaluative essay which will show how you researched and produced your project and will include comment on the success of your completed materials.

Questionnaire (to be rewritten)

1. What are the main ways in which you listen to music? [Tape - CD - Record - Radio - TV]

2. How do you find out about new music? [TV - magazines - music papers - friends - relations]

3. Which radio stations do you listen to?

4. Do these stations play music that is new to you? [If so, what?]

5. Do you have your own radio at home?

6. Is it possible for you to listen to what you want when you're at home?

7. Are there any kinds of music that you really dislike? [If so, what?]

8. Is there a particular kind of music that you identify with?

9. Do you ever go to hear music live?

10. If you go to clubs, or to hear music live, how would you decide what to wear?

11. Pick out and group together the kinds of music that you listen to most often:

reggae
rap
hip hop

ragga
dub
ambient
soul
blues
retro
techno
acid
house
jazz
hardcore
heavy metal
junglism
slam rock
indie
funk
swingbeat
rave
grunge

[add on any not listed...]

12. Which of these, if any, do you dance to?

The questions included a list of genres (see above), some picked out from earlier conversations with members of the class, others gleaned from music magazines. These questions, and particularly the list of supposed musical genres, provoked some bewilderment and mild derision. To the list of genres many added: pop, classical, punk, garage, thrash, psychedelic and bhangra. Several of the genres identified in my list were rejected as inappropriately named: rave and retro for example. Other generic titles were seen as obscure and unknown, except, perhaps, to Margaret: swingbeat, slam rock, and grunge were not familiar to them in early January 1993. No one recognized the term 'ambient'. Margaret was quick to ask 'What are these? Don't you know?'. Claire

pointed out that they, and others, may well listen to music belonging to these genres without knowing such a repertoire of generic terms. Though some of the terms were used by the students in earlier interviews, those few which came from the more 'adult' discourses of music journalism (*i-D,* for example) were not a part of their everyday repertoire. But it was partly because of the genre list's imperfect relation to their more familiar set of terms that its presentation became a productive basis for clarification. Moreover, it thus became apparent that how they divided the current field of music into particular genres would depend not just on what the music 'sounded like' but on what particular discourses around music they encountered in reading teenage magazines, watching TV and listening to radio (cf. Frith, 1996).

In their responses to the assignment, despite diversity of ethnic identity, and some degree of class difference within the group, the most marked differences in the routes they took through the work and the subsequent evaluation were those displayed between the girls and the boys (cf. Steedman, 1982; Richards, 1990; Thorne, 1993). In my classroom notes for this period, I repeatedly refer to contrasts between the behaviour of the boys' and girls' groups. For example:

> Stephen, Kemal, Alan, Paul, Martin: A kind of 'closed' unit - looks and exchanges passed between them with relatively little direct engagement with me...an avoidance? A 'leisurely', leaning back, intermittent and distanced relation to the work on the table in front of them...

> - the girls, working more individually, more easily engaged directly and tending to position themselves physically as working. (20.1.93)
>
> Another lesson of further slow progress...still the boys together, very largely, as a tight knit social cluster...the girls more loosely associated and talking across to each other over a larger space... (27.1.93)

In addition, Margaret, in particular, was eager to construct the field in terms of gender difference and, though I should note that she was clearly keen to position herself as my 'special' informant, I did find her account quite persuasive. My experience of the whole group, as participants in the classroom, was that the girls tended to work more consistently and with some, if not unvarying, commitment; the boys adopted a slow and indifferent, leisurely and distanced, relation to the work. The girls were individually more willing to discuss their progress through the assignment; the boys tended to form a more closed group, resistant to teacherly interventions. But such differences were also, in part, evidence of their negotiation of my presence, and the meanings that might be attributed to their involvement with me. What it meant to them to be chosen, and what they might allow it to mean, had to be carefully 'managed'. For the boys, to be selected out individually, and to be seen to respond with interest, in this 'adolescent' male culture, could risk taunts of 'sucking up' and other homophobic

allegations (cf. Sennett and Cobb, 1972: p.82; Willis, 1977; Mac An Ghaill, 1994; Steinberg et al, 1997: Chapter 6). For the girls, to be chosen, and to secure my attention, carried no comparable risk and, whatever their perception of my age and appearance, could probably be enjoyed as reflecting their success in attracting the interest of a male 'visitor', thus confirming themselves in 'the hegemonic masculine gaze' (see Hey, 1997).

Talking to the Girls

In the session with the girls (Sara, Margaret, Gemma, Asiye) there was an attentiveness to the questions I posed which, in marked contrast with the boys, suggested some degree of interest in taking up and sustaining the position of student in relation to my presence as teacher. Initially, there was an almost disconcerting formality in the way that they placed themselves physically. They looked as if they were engaged in an event which, in its recording, would be the basis of judgement upon them. They tended to reply to my questions cautiously, replaying the terms of the question as I had asked it (cf. Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: p.97). Once the main body of assessment orientated questions had been asked, more informal utterances, expressions of exasperation and amusement or comments between friends, did occur. But still, the tension between formality and a less constrained conversational 'banter' did persist.

Given this brief account of the situation, I want to consider some of the detail of what they could say. Take my initial recorded question and the response:

> CR: The point is, in the process of doing a unit of work like that, what do you think you're learning about, are you actually finding out more about music or are you just using the knowledge of music that you already have?
> Margaret: Well, I didn't actually learn anything about music from it, I just like demonstrated the knowledge I already had...How about you Sara...?

Here the response is contained safely within the boundaries of the polarity I presented in my question; and, further, the term 'demonstrated' is one which locates her response within the assessment rhetoric presented to GCSE students. Uncomfortable with the question, but also assigned the responsibility of holding the microphone, Margaret turned to pass the question to Sara, thus turning her responsibility to her own advantage. Margaret occupied a key position throughout the discussion, presenting herself as always, if not infallibly, knowledgeable. For example, in response to my repeated attempts to elicit more explicit definitions of the musical genres with which they shared a familiarity, and to which I had no easy access, Margaret was adept in handling the difficulty they all encountered - that of there being no elaborated discourse of musical description available to them - by transposing the problem to the level of a philosophical conundrum:

Sara: Well you know about it [music] but you've asked me several million times now to define hardcore to you
Margaret: Yeah he's asked me that as well...
CR: Yeah so what're the problems in explaining it, why is it so difficult?
Sara: 'Cause there're so many different types of music
Margaret: You've got to hear it for yourself yeah
Sara: We know what it is
Margaret: It's like asking, it's like asking someone to define I and then if you say me, they say define me...you can't just define something like that, if it's something you know...
CR: Yeah OK, but I mean is it because in a way you're all so used to the fact that you all know what you're talking about?
All{ Yeah
Margaret: You don't meet young people who say 'So what's hardcore then?'
CR: No, well, exactly
Margaret: Everyone knows what it is...

This moment illustrates both Margaret's position of relative power and precisely identifies the peculiarity of making explicit what is known and familiar to participants in an informal cultural practice. Her strategy was effective in enabling her to justify what, in this formal context, might be judged a linguistic 'inadequacy' in terms which counter that implication with a display of rhetorical skill. In effect, she turned age-relations to my disadvantage, leaving my question exposed as an act of cultural incompetence, and, in this instance, positioning herself as an 'adolescent' insider to an adolescent culture. At other points in the discussion, Margaret took on the role of restating some of my more rambling and discontinuous questions:

Margaret: Instead of using the pictures he means wouldn't it be better to listen to the music...

She thus mediated between myself and the group. As I have suggested, she seemed to position herself as a respondent more privileged than the others. However, all of the girls were more interested respondents than the boys and this was apparent in their more focused attempts to engage with whatever questions I asked. Similarly, though they did voice criticisms, their comments on the work that they were asked to do were more positive than those offered by the boys:

> CR: What did you enjoy most in actually doing that unit of work, if anything?
> Margaret: I enjoyed designing the record sleeve
> Sara: It's something we wanted to do more than something we had to do, I suppose you could put it like that
> CR: Why, why did you want to do it?
> Sara: 'Cause it was an interesting type of topic, it's not something you can get to do in all your lessons [Yeah - Margaret] ...something different, totally different
> Gemma: I enjoyed designing the sleeve as well

Whatever the degree of their actual enjoyment, here, once again the girls take up the question, repeating the word 'enjoy' and, through Sara, elaborating in response to its invitation, position themselves as 'good' (*really* interested) students: 'something we wanted to do', 'interesting', 'different'. Enjoyment, however, should not be assumed to correspond directly to any formal measure of success. It seemed, more loosely, that 'enjoyment' was accepted as an element in their tacit understanding of femininity as at least partially confirmed within the settings that education

constructs (though, for some detailed differentiations, see Hey, 1997). Perhaps for them, to 'please' a (male?) teacher, confirmed their self-positioning as feminine within heterosexual discourse (cf. Richards, 1990; Wolpe, 1988; Green, 1997). Being a good student and being a girl, in this context, did seem more likely to involve convergent performances. By contrast, for the boys, pleasing teachers required some more awkward effort of reconciliation between contradictory versions of the gendered self. This is discussed further in my account of the parallel session with the boys, below.

At this point, I want to expand upon the girls' relation to music through further extracts from the transcript:

> CR: ...I mean what I'm getting at is how important is it to you to be able to buy music on record or CD or tape?
> Margaret: I don't, I never buy music...
> Sara: It has to be.....really, really good that I really really like
> Margaret: I don't, I can't remember the last time that I've bought music 'cause if I like something [get it?]...off other people...yeah, well I just, dunno, dunno, one of my sisters or my brother'll get it probably so I just tape it off them
> CR: So do none of you actually collect tapes or records?
> All{: No
> CR: Not really...
> Gemma: My mum goes out and buys tapes, stuff that I like, she goes out and buys it for herself
> CR: So where, I mean if you dance to music where do you actually get to dance to it?
> Margaret: Oh loads of places
> CR: Like?
> Margaret: Clubs, raves, parties but I don't really, I don't really dance at parties
> CR: Where do you dance, at clubs?

Margaret:....and raves
CR: Right, is that the case for everybody or...?
Gemma: Not really
Sara: I don't really go to raves, I've never been to a rave...I've been to parties and danced there, I always dance at parties
Margaret: I don't
CR: But you never actually, would you actually...
Margaret: It's my reputation
CR: Is it?
Margaret: I sit there and go 'I never dance at parties' unless I'm really drunk and then I don't dance to hardcore
Sara: You didn't dance at Julian's, did you?
Margaret: No (laughs)
CR: If you heard something at a party or a rave or whatever, that you were dancing to, would you ever actually try to
Margaret: Buy it?
CR:...buy it?
Margaret: No, but I know lots of people who do, like my friends who're like into mixing and stuff...they buy records to mix in with their other records
CR: Are they...girls?
Margaret: Boys
CR: Right
Margaret: Girls don't really do that so much
CR: I know, I wonder about that...why, I mean it doesn't seem to be the case that girls collect records or tapes or CDs at all really or not to any significant extent, I wonder why not?
Margaret: I think it's a bit of a waste of money, I wouldn't bother wasting my money on that 'cause I can spend it on better things

To some extent, Margaret is doing 'being interviewed' (see also Appendix 1), appearing to claim a first-hand knowledge of activities associated with older youth (her sister?) and beyond the experience of the other girls present.

Bearing in mind, again, the tactical purposes of these responses, there are a variety of themes to follow through here. The self-identification as dancers, though neither

common to all four nor uncomplicated for any of them, was nevertheless an important point of difference relative to the boys' comments on music and dancing. *Buying* and *collecting* music was, on the whole, less evident in the girls' self-accounts than in those of the boys. This is a contentious point. Wider evidence, derived from statistical survey data for example,[2] is not especially sensitive to gender differentiated patterns of consumption and use. The scope of my own research did not extend to those contexts of consumption where other kinds of data might have been produced. My argument is limited to the terms in which the students represented themselves and, therefore, I don't intend any conclusive claim about the gendered division of young people's engagement with music. But this issue should be one of continuing importance for media teachers seeking to involve their students in exploratory investigations of young people's uses of music. Moreover, my speculative claim that strong self-positioning through the possession of music might be associated with a more separated and delimited version of the self, is one which should inform the conduct of such investigations: a matter for self-reflection and for small-scale enquiry by students themselves. In my research, this emphasis on 'possession', for young people between 15 and 17, was less marked in the girls' self-accounts discussed here and in Chapter 6. Their relative lack of money constrained any significant spending, and they tended to deny that the

money they did have was spent on music (see Appendix 1). For Margaret, with her personal stereo, the economy of home-taping gave her sufficient access to the music she wanted to hear (cf. O'Brien, 1995). On the whole, music was to be heard and perhaps to be danced to, the precondition for pleasurable activities and not a set of objects to be accumulated.

By contrast with buying and accumulation, dancing is assumed to be an activity central to the lives of adolescent girls (see Appendix 1).[3] As it happens, in this particular session, two of the girls made no claim upon it - Asiye did not speak, Gemma evaded the question with 'Not really'. These girls were all still living at home with parents and, at 15, their lives were regulated and limited in ways which made occasions for dancing relatively infrequent. However, the girls' preoccupation with dancing as the preeminent mode of involvement with music was more evident in the assignments on which they were working and which I discuss in the next chapter. Moreover, dance music, among the larger group of girls in the class, was significantly more popular than other forms. In this session, Sara acknowledged more involvement, though it was restricted to 'parties', a forum which Margaret disowned as a place to dance unless 'drunk' and thus implicitly less responsible for compromising the social identity she wished to sustain. Between the girls here, Margaret positioned herself as somewhat more 'hip' (see Ross,

1989; also, Appendix 1) than Sara, implicitly locating 'parties' as beneath both 'clubs' and 'raves' in her cultural hierarchy. The 'reputation' Margaret wishes to sustain is not, it seems, primarily to do with risks to her 'sexual' status, but is mostly a matter of maintaining her particular sense of 'subcultural' distinction (Thornton, 1995). Margaret was keen to make these distinctions, taking space in the discussion to claim a degree of cultural authority. At the same time, she also most effectively 'portrayed' herself, constituting herself as having, or being, an 'image' and thus someone to be looked at, by myself as the only man present, and by the other girls. She represented herself as more completely 'composed' than they, as yet, could claim to be - and this was achieved both by her words and by her attention to details of dress and make-up (see Chapter 3).

Another dimension of the way in which these girls placed themselves, explicitly contrasting the mode of their enjoyment with that of boys, emerged in a discussion of ragga:

> CR: Do girls listen to ragga very much...as much as boys?
> Margaret: Yeah...boys take it in more...I mean generally boys are more listening to the messages of the song...
> CR: Which are what?
> Margaret: It's like 'Oh yeah girls pum pum went did this shot a man blah blah blah girl's a bitch' all that but boys, boys listen to that more than girls and think of it like more 'this is serious, this is the way I feel blah blah blah' more than girls do
> CR: I mean I've not heard much ragga...

> Margaret: Girls like the music, I like the music, I don't like some of the messages that it's putting across to young boys...when I say young boys I'm not trying to sound like a grown up, they're more my age but...[ ] influenced by it
> Gemma: There's one, there's one ragga song that puts across a message about gambling and having to go out and shoot all of them and I don't think that's a very nice thing to be putting across
> Margaret: Raggas are really anti-gay...[Yeah...] and like no respect for girls really...no respect for any woman except for their mums really (laughter)...it's fashionable to respect their mum but no one else, it's true

Margaret was marking out quite a complicated position here. She differentiated between two modes of listening, one attentive to the sonic qualities of ragga, the other engaging with and entering into the meaning of what is spoken or sung (cf. Goodwin, 1993: p.94). She tended, on this occasion, to attribute the latter to boys alone, those others who, in that common strategy of displacement, are influenced by the 'message' and 'take it in'. This apparent vulnerability, or willingness, to ingest ragga meanings - to take them into the self - is what, in the discourse of media 'effects', adults might ascribe to children and 'adolescents'. Here, Margaret almost locates herself as an adult, 'grown-up', but, given her position as an 'adolescent' herself, shifts more definitely towards voicing her critique as a girl, implicitly drawing upon the sedimented common-sense that girls mature earlier than boys. By these means, she thus locates herself as able to explain, and distance herself from, boys' enjoyment of ragga. Moreover, as I suggested in Chapter 3,

she also achieves a position in an educationally legitimated feminist discourse - if simultaneously submitting herself for approval by myself as a (male?) teacher.

In these moments, Margaret positioned herself as capable of a somewhat distanced, rational and self-aware enjoyment and a discrimination between elements of a single piece of music. She thus enabled herself to adopt some mobility between positions allowing both enjoyment of the music and condemnation of ragga machismo, which she mocked with considerable wit, thus further securing her self-representation as the most 'hip' among this group of girls. Whatever one might think of ragga, her tactical belittling of aspirations to adult masculinity among both the young male audience and the ragga performers themselves - on the one hand 'little boys', on the other, only able to 'respect their mums' - was entirely successful here. It made me laugh, it made the other girls laugh, and she got herself quoted both here and in an earlier version of this chapter.[4] She voiced 'the right words', but also as if they were entirely her own (see Bakhtin, 1994), to secure approval and amusement both in the immediate context and in publication. As I will argue in the next chapter, Margaret was able to position herself within a discourse of critical rationalism which gave her the opportunity to be both 'hip' and 'educated' - and thus to secure 'subcultural' and 'educational' capital in the same

moment (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1986; Ross, 1989; Thornton, 1995).

Meanwhile, Gemma's more muted criticisms tended in the same direction but largely 'echoed' Margaret's formulations. When I moved the discussion towards rap, it faltered because of their relative lack of interest in, or knowledge of, this music. But, following a question about Queen Latifah, Margaret, once again, took up a distinctive position, in this case approving of the sound of male rappers, and thus sustaining her self-representation as able to differentiate between ideological meanings and the sonic qualities of music (cf. Green, 1988), if also, simultaneously, endorsing a view of rap as properly masculine (see Rose, 1994; Green, 1997):

> Margaret: I dunno I don't really like women rappers, nothing against them, it's just like, I don't know...
> Gemma: ...sounds different
> Margaret: A man's voice sounds better doing it, I think, it's just 'cause what I'm used to really...I like De La Soul, I used to like De La Soul
> Gemma(?): My mum liked them
> Margaret: Everyone liked'em...Arrested Development are good

In this case, however, it is apparent that Gemma's comments are perhaps a little problematic for Margaret. She has to elaborate quickly around Gemma's 'sounds different' and also dilute the possible blow to her prestige contained in the remark that 'my mum liked' De La Soul. Thus, she renders 'liking De La Soul' an instance of their universal popularity

rather than indicative of some quality she shares with another girl's mother and quickly moves on to initiate a brief exchange about Arrested Development, at the time a much more recent innovation associated with rap.

In the next extract from the discussion, Asiye set off a debate in contention with her observation that there was no strong connection between dress style and musical taste:

> Asiye: I mean you can't really tell what a person listens to just by looking at them
> Gemma: Yeah you can
> Asiye: I can't
> Margaret: 'Course you can if you see like say take someone for example, take Pauline for example someone dressed like a ragga, you don't think 'Oh they must be into classical' do you? You think 'Oh they're into ragga' and if you see other people, if you see Peter --- , then you think, you don't know who Peter is do you? [I do -] yeah you know if you look at Peter and you think 'Oh he's into hardcore'....[section omitted]... It's dress, it's the way people dress that makes you
> Gemma: Yeah but look at me, you wouldn't think I listen to ragga would you?
> Asiye: Maybe it's the, just
> Margaret: You wouldn't think you didn't listen to ragga
> Gemma: No but you wouldn't exactly say
> Sara: 'Cause she listens to it most of the time
> ---: Oh you'd look at you and think you could listen to anything
> Gemma: True, which I do
> Sara: What about----- what would you say they were into?
> Gemma: Teeny bop music (laughter) Take That
> Sara: Geena (?) had that thing on, what's it called, ...New Kids on the Block, do you remember?
> CR: You don't like Take That?
> All{: No
> CR: What's wrong with Take That?
> ---: What's right with 'em?
> Margaret: They're little, they're little boys
> [section omitted]
> Margaret: I don't hate them...I'm not really bothered by them.....there's gotta be, there's

> gotta be that kind of music for some people, it's just not for me...if I see girls who're into Take That I'm a bit sort of like...I don't have any respect for them or anything (laughing) I don't have an...
> [section omitted]
> CR: What do you think of the girls who like Take That?
> ---: ...waste of time...
> Margaret: The girls who like Take That are just so immature and stupid...they're just childish and like...
> Asiye: You wouldn't think they were interested in the music, they just fancy the person, the people 'cause if they were ugly I doubt if anybody would really take any interest in them...

In the discussion conducted in my 'pilot' study (see Appendix 1), Asiye was much more reticent, saying little more than that she listened to London's mainstream pop radio station (Capital). But she was interested in being present and volunteered herself for the smaller group discussions on both occasions. In this case, her comment raised another kind of question about relative degrees of knowledge among the group and involved further positional negotiations. Asiye's apparent uncertainty in reading dress codes in relation to musical tastes was not entirely dismissed by the others and could be read as another instance of that tactical refusal to be categorized sometimes adopted by others in this study. Gemma, and to some extent Sara, took up a 'mediating' position, between Asiye and Margaret, by suggesting a degree of indeterminacy in the relation between public self-presentation and musical preference. Margaret, to the contrary, and in this context without reference to herself,

seemed to regard such a view as a consequence of a lack of knowledge, knowledge to which she positioned herself as having access. Once again, Margaret seemed to invoke a hierarchy of cultural competence within which she could claim the 'hip' stance and, in this case, voice the 'informed opinion' she had encountered elsewhere in educational discourse.

In the exchanges which followed, they negotiated the division which emerged between them, in part through a shared unwillingness to accept rigid correspondences between appearance and taste when they might be referred to themselves (cf. Widdecombe and Wooffitt, 1995: Chapter 5) and, more powerfully, by taking up a collective self-positioning as older and more sophisticated in relation to Take That, the 'teeny bop scene'. In deriding 'teeny bop', they located themselves as a group along an implicit axis of age. In this respect, dividing themselves from younger girls was somewhat more urgent than differentiating themselves from boys, with whom they would not expect to be confused in any case (cf. Hey, 1997). Thus despite the fact the audience for Take That must have been composed largely of girls between the ages of 9 and 13, here these 15 and 16 year olds acknowledged little sense of connection with, or prior involvement in, the 'teeny bop scene'. Again, the educational setting is important: here girls are grouped together within

a narrow age band (one year) and in the presence of a male adult. To like Take That would be to (re)locate themselves in 'middle childhood' - 'immature', 'stupid', 'childish' - a condition of relative powerlessness from which they are concerned to distance themselves. Furthermore, they implicitly refuse the act of (female) subjection to (male) stars commonly attributed to fans. To some extent, they claim maturity, and the power it implies, by inscribing themselves both in a more dispassionate aesthetic (music, not bodies) and in a discourse of adult heterosexuality (big, not little, girls/bodies). It is far more important for them, therefore, to position themselves as growing beyond, if still within, 'adolescence', rather than to affiliate themselves to any one genre of music; and on this even Margaret and Asiye, momentarily, agree.

Talking to the Boys

A group of four boys, one black (Stephen), the others white (Paul, Jamie, Alan), were recorded discussing their work. The session was marked by a buoyant refusal of seriousness. They grinned and giggled, fell and jostled against each other and spread themselves on the chairs, softer than those available in the classroom. They made the discussion an occasion for having a laugh, dismissive of the work but animated by just thirty minutes away from the classroom. In some respects it was a much easier, informal and relatively

conversational, event than the session with the girls. Thus there was, throughout, a mood of relaxed amusement, despite negative and critical comments like this:

> CR: What did you enjoy most, if anything, in actually doing this unit of work?
> Stephen: Erm...Not doing it would have been the best thing I reckon...I didn't feel it was worth it...
> Jamie: This has been the best bit really
> Stephen: I reckon it was worth us doing it...maybe to do up the work...I didn't really enjoy doing it, that's the reason why.....well I'm not writing no...
> CR: What did you think of it, did you enjoy any of it?
> Jamie: This bit

'This bit' was full of wind-ups, mockery and laughter. There was much less of that effort to cooperate, of 'serious' engagement with the questions, which characterised much of the discussion with the girls. In one respect, this can be explained in terms of their somewhat defensive lack of 'investment' in educational success. For example, reflecting on the dissipation of classroom time, but without gravity, Jamie commented '...this time [next year] we'll be regretting it probably'. For them, as I observed during many lessons, time in school passed, conversations hung, hardly audible, between boys leaning away from their work, waiting for the lesson to end (cf. Willis, 1977). But the context of the discussion also provided them with an opportunity to enact, or perform, 'being boys'. In the classroom, they were often wary of being singled out, keeping a distance from the teacher and the dialogue that might threaten to separate one

from another. However, together as a group in the English Department's office, they were less at risk, less vulnerable to the inquisitive intimacy of a one-to-one dialogue with myself as a teacher. Somewhat free of that mix of anxieties - the sexual and intellectual threat of being singled out by a male teacher - they could negotiate my questions from within the security they constructed for themselves-as-a-group. The discussion was a layered and complex event. Their utterances, voiced publicly for each other, were inflected by actions, looks and laughter. Stephen also made much of his control of the microphone, frequently inserting his own whispered but, as recorded, highly audible comments. But the others also often seemed to manipulate the volume of their remarks, or their proximity in relation to the microphone. In effect, then, they made the event an occasion over which they could exercise some degree of precarious, and mutually contested, control.

Given this description of the session, I want now to select out some particular strands in their discussion. In many ways, Stephen, despite his negative comments, also spoke as someone with a case to make, sometimes as if on behalf of the group. He was the only one to suggest the mode of teacher engagement which, together in the classroom, they made so difficult - arguing for more individual help from teachers. He was also a little more inclined towards a broad view of

education as informing him in relation to a future beyond the school and beyond a narrow understanding of the 'local'. To some extent, this was consistent with his self-location in the black Atlantic diaspora (Gilroy, 1993) which emerged in the earlier interviews (see Appendix 1). Then, it was apparent that his significant range of reference allowed a sense of international connection, and that what was 'local', a black pirate radio station for example, also embodied a transnational culture. By contrast, Alan, on this occasion, was somewhat dismissive of Stephen's call for knowledge of 'other countries': 'a country like El Salvador, you ain't exactly going to go over there are you'. Thus by comparison, Alan anchored himself in a much more bounded space than that implied by Stephen's black cultural geography.

It was Stephen who made the one distinctive suggestion about what an engagement with music in Media Studies could be like:

> Stephen: If you took us to the studio where they like...and showed us what they do there, maybe that would help us more understand some more things or something

This wish to know more of the conditions of production, of the work process through which the music they know is made, is one that should inform any practice of teaching and identifies a domain of productive knowledge from which school, for him, was frustratingly remote. In one way, this

illuminates his comment that he would do the work if he was interested in it. What a meagrely resourced classroom could provide was, in this case, not enough to make working worthwhile. I want to comment further on the importance of work-related contexts for learning in later chapters but here it is worth noting that his critical responses are by no means of school as such but are really quite specific and, despite their lack of elaboration, productive.

In developing an argument around this discussion with the boys there is a tendency to assume a consistent degree of contrast with what the girls had to say. However, while noting differences, it is important to avoid any exaggerated polarisation (cf. Thorne, 1993). For example, they did listen to much the same range of music and, on the whole, the differences lay in the way they spoke of their modes of engagement. Thus, though the girls seemed largely uninterested in spending their money on music, and accumulating a collection, the boys did claim to collect, if not always buy, tapes and, in some cases, CDs. I raised this issue with them:

> CR:... do you all buy records and CDs?
> Stephen: (very close to the microphone) Nah, nah only buy records or tapes what I'm interested in...if they just...I like music...I wouldn't buy it, copy it off of someone...
> CR: Do you collect music on tape
> Stephen: Yeah
> CR: I mean do you tape...what you tape from other people's records?

Alan: Yeah from other people or someone at home whatever
CR: And you buy CDs...How many have you got to by now?
Alan: Thirty seven
CR: Thirty seven!
Stephen: From last August
CR: What about you?
Paul: Well I buy 'em, I record 'em off me brother, friends, depends if I like it or not I buy it

In fact, home-taping seemed to be quite widespread among both boys and girls but here, given money, the boys would spend it on records and CDs. Furthermore, the quick and exact quantification of Alan's CDs (a fact seemingly already known to Stephen) suggested a pride in achieving an individuated and quantifiable embodiment of musical tastes. Such pride is characterised as distinctively masculine, and with some humour, in Sarah Thornton's comment that 'The size of a *man's* record collection has long been a measure of his subcultural capital!' (Thornton, 1995: p.118; see, also, for a fictional treatment, Hornby, 1995; and O'Brien 1995; Straw, 1997). The fact of possessing a collection of CDs, 'thirty-seven', seemed to enable Alan to claim a measure of 'distinction' among these boys. His literally remarkable, and perhaps envied, collection was also an indication of money earned, and thus of a masculine maturity achieved, in a context where most of the boys, lacking any income, seemed to borrow or tape from brothers and other relatives. Indeed, in the earlier interview (see Appendix 1) with Alan I was drawn into a conversation which seemed propelled by a similarly

masculine concern with money and the technology, the system, it could buy.[5] This hints at the argument I resume in Chapter 6, where I suggest a relation between the achievement of male identities and the assembly of objects - objects which serve to make visible, and to demarcate, the precarious autonomy of such identities. Though I make this case with reference to Chodorow's (1978) account of 'separation' in the formation of masculine identities, it is important not to neglect either the boys' dependence upon other family members for both money and recordings or, as will become apparent in Chapter 6, the greater financial power to collect suggested by those more middle class students.

A further, and similarly contentious, point of difference between the girls' self-representations and those of the boys lay in their responses to my questions about dance:

> CR:...one of the things I asked a moment ago was about whether or not you buy records but I mean the thing, I s'pose - when I talked to the girls, or three or four of the girls, on Friday - that they said more was that dancing seemed to be important and that the music that they talked about was generally music that they danced to...I mean is that important to you? Does dancing come into [inaudible] to any extent at all?
> Stephen: Nah
> Others{: No
> CR: No? So you wouldn't buy something because you think it's good to dance to, you wouldn't tape it because you think it's good to dance to?
> Jamie: ...all that matters is whether you like it...it doesn't have to make you wanna dance

My conversational approach, introducing the topic by reporting to them something of the girls' earlier comments, can be criticized for eliciting precisely the response I received. But I had to inject such information to keep the discussion going. Retrospectively, I realized that it is a methodological tactic given some support by Bourdieu:

> [P]eople could place themselves not in relation to a question to which they must invent both an answer as well as [a] problematic, but in relation to problematics and responses which have already been prepared. In other words, the opinion survey would be closer to reality if it totally violated the rules of objectivity and gave people the means to situate themselves as they really do in real practice in relation to already formulated opinions.[6]

Within the context of the discussion, it would have been awkward (if also tactically interesting) to pretend that these boys don't already know that 'girls are into dancing'. I wonder, too, if dance is still an activity from which boys might want, necessarily, to dissociate themselves.[7] Dancing was actually acknowledged, but not in response to a direct question, elsewhere in the session - by Jamie, for example, 'it makes you wanna move more than say 60s'. Even in tactical terms among the four boys, there seemed little to be gained by a complete denial of interest in dance. Whether or not these boys did dance, it is certainly the case that they did not make dancing a central feature of their self-presentation. There *are* risks in dancing, perhaps even in speaking of an interest in dancing: to dance can attract the

look of others, putting the body on display, open to desire, to admiration and to ridicule (see McClary, 1991). But, equally, for boys to lay no claim to competence in dancing at all might just as easily invite mockery - of inadequacy in contexts where they do actually meet up with girls outside school. Furthermore, forms of dance are now quite diverse and, especially since the innovations of punk and the more recent formation of 'club cultures' (Redhead, 1993; McRobbie, 1994; Thornton, 1995), can include relatively anonymous actions of improbable interest to onlookers. What does emerge more definitely here, and later in the session, is that they tend to represent choices in buying or taping music as somewhat autonomous, and again with some hint at separation from others: 'all that matters is whether you like it'. Thus, though brothers and friends are acknowledged (and may be significant sources), choices tend to be located more in individuated 'tastes' than in their participation in social activities such as dancing.

The boys were sometimes resistant, evasive and mocking in their responses to my questions. While they were willing to offer explanations of the music I asked about, they also exercised some care in representing how they individually, and sometimes as a group, wanted to be positioned in terms of musical taste. For example, Stephen, at the same time as offering some more 'public' responses, also resorted to close

'asides' to the microphone, marking himself off from the others somewhat and distancing himself from genres of music for which he presented himself as having little respect. In the following extract, as in the earlier interviews (see Appendix 1), he positioned himself within the terms of a black cultural domain. To some extent, he continued to situate himself at a vantage point somewhat apart from that adopted by the others. This phase of the session began with a question about 'hardcore':

> Jamie: It's the hard bit of an apple
> Stephen: (close to the microphone) I reckon it's a loada, a loada drum beats
> Jamie: No it depends, some of it's good, some of it ain't good, some people've put more interest into it, more money into it, make better records
> Stephen: (still close to the microphone) You could do it at home really with a couple a pots and pans and a organ
> CR: (addressing Jamie) Could you describe it then?
> Jamie: You can't..it's very difficult
> Stephen: I reckon it's, it's quite a lota bass
> Jamie: Yeah that's it...it makes you wanna move more than say 60s.....it's more for like...some people might take drugs with it like
> CR: But it's dance music
> Stephen: Yeah energy, energy rock.....
> CR: With the record that's number one at the moment, would that be hardcore, 2 unlimited
> ---: That's techno
> Stephen: Nah, that's techno...I reckon they're all the same but they just give 'em different names when they feel like it
> CR: It sounds similar?
> Jamie: ...more synthesizer
> CR: What, techno's more synthesised? So you know there's a difference even though you couldn't describe it
> Jamie: There's a difference
> [section omitted]
> CR: If you say something's hardcore rap, what do you mean by that? When you say it's hardcore...
> Stephen: Well you can hear if.....it's probably...just got...you could hear mostly...steal things if you understand...that's all they

do...they just sampling...so if you hear a bit of rap you probably say it's hardcore rap or whatever
CR: Right...what's the difference between rap and hardcore rap?
Stephen: There's not a difference I don't... they're just tiefing [thieving], that's just putting some cruddy [crappy] beat behind it...change it for themselves

The 'main' dialogue here is initially between myself and Jamie, with Stephen alternating between audible interjections and more 'subversive', semi-whispered, comments close to the microphone. Both 'hardcore' and 'techno' are, if not entirely endorsed, given some considered attention by Jamie - one of those boys who did indicate some interest in dance music. Stephen's comments mock such music seemingly on the grounds that it requires little musical skill and, in this respect, his comments are not unlike those Alan made with respect to 'acid' and 'rap'. Thus, though Alan and Stephen have different musical preferences, to some extent they do both draw upon a common discourse of musical value. Stephen's response to my question about 'hardcore rap' confirms this. He takes the question to refer not to a particular category of rap, hardcore as adjectival, but to a mix, implying a conjunction of hardcore and rap. In effect, he describes a sampling of rap mixed with a dance track - 'just tiefing, that's just putting some cruddy beat behind it'. Given his marked black pronunciation of 'thieving', it is reasonable to suggest that here he speaks very much from a black cultural position. Indeed, it was as if, in this context, to allow

'hardcore' to describe 'rap', a music he did endorse, might contaminate it with that which he did not. Ironically, the accusation of 'stealing' is made in much the same way that Alan belittled rap[8] by contrast with the authenticity of musicianship and self-expression he located in Simply Red. Thus, to reiterate, they render the music they reject as 'other' by means of broadly similar criteria of musical value perhaps sharing a history in a discourse of (male?) musicianship as a craft, with its proper sites of production: in a studio, and not 'at home', in the domestic domain, with 'a couple a pots and pans and a organ'.

Jamie, an elusive student only very occasionally present in class, could confidently refuse being positioned by my questions and imply some competence in 'discrimination' within genres - 'it's just whether or not I like it'. He introduced the term taste, explicitly, into the discussion. But even without it, much of the teasing and provocation, which continued through most of the interview, involved implicit allegations of bad or laughable taste. If Stephen was able to classify himself through an endorsement of the taste categories associated with black music, the others were sometimes a little more vulnerable - to each other, not to my questions. The following discussion took place towards the end of the session, in response to a suggestion that they present and explain the music they like:

Jamie: You can't explain why you like it

CR: Well you could try, well you can...
Jamie: It's taste innit...different taste
CR: OK, so what's taste?
Jamie: I dunno...taste's not something that's really definable
CR: What...what do other people think, is taste hard to define?
Stephen: No, not really...yeah
CR: I mean is taste just to do with the particular person you are?
Jamie: Well it varies all around [I reckon - Stephen] it ain't, there might be coincidence in tastes and similar tastes but no one's gonna be exactly the same [You probably just have - Stephen] some people like more bits than other on a record
[section omitted]
Stephen: I reckon it's ages and things like that and what you get from friends and stuff...you get...get like...
CR: Yeah go on Alan, if you've got something to say, say it, come on
Stephen: Ah shit...you get ideas from your friends, what they listen to, if you like it, sometimes you just, they give you an idea of the music...he likes Simply Red and Erasure (laughter, derision)
Alan: (protesting)
Stephen: Julian Clary
Jamie:.....live in a time warp
Stephen:...and things like Julian Clary and Boy George... I don't like a couple a dem I wouldn't like look at but like some, some their songs on what's it called er, Undercover, I would find some of them alright, not all of 'em, like Arrested Development, that's the kinda music I like...if he listens to it, when we do erm music lessons, we just listen to music from everybody, what they like so
CR: (To Alan) Do you like Arrested Development?
Alan:...bit, I sort of like two songs...[Mr. Wendell]s'alright...Revolution's alright
Stephen: He prefers what's 'is name, Julian 'n' Clary
CR: I mean what kind of music is Arrested Development anyway?
Stephen: I reckon it's funk rap
CR: Funk rap...yeah
Stephen: It's got like y'know funk beats or ...they just rap and some other jazz and stuff, they just mix it...southern kind of rap, southern rap
[brief section omitted]
CR: (To Jamie) What do you listen to?

Jamie: All kinds of music...it could be a bit of music from anything...if I hear it and I like it, I listen to it
Stephen:.....that was from Freddie Mercury
Jamie: I didn't mind the first song, but I like all things, reggae or it could be pop music, anything, anything in pop music, it's just whether or not I like it
CR: Right
Stephen: Same here and for everybody
CR: Right so there's not one kind of music that you decide you're gonna stick to?
Jamie: No 'cause you can say 'Oh well Alan likes the Housemartins' (much laughter) but then there might be a song that he don't like
Paul: ...and then he doesn't like the Housemartins
CR: What's so funny about the Housemartins?
Paul: What ain't funny about 'em?
Stephen: They're just a funky band....they're not really...they're just dry really
Jamie: The Flying Pickets...Remember the Flying Pickets
CR: What about you Paul, is there one particular kind of music you like more than others?
----: (on Paul's 'behalf') Morrissey (laughter)
CR: What's that?
Jamie: Morrissey
Paul: No, hardcore

The transcript can't adequately represent the layering of comment and counter-comment and the continuity of laughter and derision. Nevertheless, it should be apparent that, as the question of taste gained a faltering momentum in the discussion, the efforts they made to satisfy the insistence of my questions were increasingly mixed with provocative attributions of taste to others. Certainly such attributions produced anxiety and could not be left unchallenged, but no one was unduly disconcerted by any particular attribution and indeed what took place was, it seemed, normal for this group and for the wider male culture in which they participate (see

Buckingham in Buckingham 1993b; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). Of course, that 'normality' is one which heavily prescribes heterosexual identification and routinely ridicules any ambiguity in male self-presentation. Here, these boys draw upon a homophobic discourse, implicitly 'feminizing' each other by asserting their taste for acts defined as gay, cross-dressing or 'wimpish' - Erasure, Boy George, Julian Clary.[9] However, within this group, on this occasion, the potential for division or exclusion was not realized. It was particularly striking that, despite Stephen's teasing of Alan and others, he did nevertheless re-identify himself with the group in terms of the general argument about taste: 'Same here and for everybody' and, moreover, drew on a more social account of taste thus somewhat undermining the threat involved in isolating individuals 'in' their tastes: 'I reckon it's ages and things like that and what you get from friends and stuff...'.

Nevertheless, Stephen also tended to initiate, and was himself exempt from, the various 'less-than-heterosexual' taste attributions. The vulnerability of the others, partly contingent on power relations within the group, could also be magnified by remaining reticent. Not to state tastes, and thus position themselves, was to risk being positioned by others and this, in this context, seemed to have a sexual connotation. Perhaps for Paul to state, bluntly, 'hardcore'

was more than to fix himself through a single generic affiliation. Given the connotations of 'hardcore' in the wider context of media culture, referring invariably to the most visually explicit pornography, it is not surprising that the term, even though unequivocally denoting a musical genre in this context, can also be inflected in an especially masculine way. At the very least, 'hardcore' implies 'hard' as in tough, 'hard' as in erect as well as 'hard' as in 'hardcore pornography'. Paul, who was physically the slightest among those boys present, has to respond to Jamie's taunt without hesitation. To like Morrissey, and accept not only sexual ambiguity but association with a figure long out of fashion, at least in the south, is clearly to be made ridiculous. Along with other bands, The Housemartins or The Flying Pickets[10] for example, the meanings of these attributions are seemingly self-evident among these boys and their force requires no elaboration, except marginally for my benefit. In this larger context then, 'hardcore' also has the weight of 'authenticity' - because it isn't 'techno', isn't in the charts and is constructed as 'subcultural' - and can therefore be an extremely economical means to freeze that play with their positions implicit in having others declare their tastes for them.

But I don't want to suggest that claiming a fixed taste identification in this way is always the tactical preference.

It is Paul, after all, who remarks that a 'taste' is ephemeral: 'and then he doesn't like the Housemartins'. Indeed, they all retained a degree of taste mobility and just as, at one moment, hardcore was the secure option so, at another, was representing the self as floating free from any particular affiliations at all. But, what does unite these tactical options is that in adopting either of them, it seemed to matter to the boys here not to be taste classified by others. In this respect, then, they were using a repertoire of performers to entice each other into risky object choices and, in effect, to reassert the boundaries of their version of masculinity. To play this game demands both the specific cultural knowledge they largely share - Arrested Development are safe, Erasure are not - and the determination not to accept the position in which someone else places them. Within these terms it is clearly inconceivable, and would immediately disrupt the security of the 'game', to either simply accept an attribution or to lay claim to an act regarded as other than heterosexual.

It should be recalled that the girls were by no means indifferent to this sort of tactical positioning through taste. For example, none of the group considered earlier would want to be identified with a taste for Take That. For them, it was of some importance to position themselves in terms of a later age phase and thus to refuse 'childish'

immaturity. Their self-positioning was orientated towards adult futures if also drawing upon knowledge they represented as particular to 'young people' - thus turning being 'adolescent' to their advantage in relation to myself as an adult. But, in the group, they did not taunt each other with problematic tastes but attributed such tastes to others, not present. Thus, though they too, like the boys, are positioned as 'adolescent' and do not welcome being positioned by others, they did not so obviously challenge each other with the risks of attraction to 'inappropriate' performers. Of course, that potential was there and for any one of them to claim to be a fan of Take That would be unwise in the context of that group. However, for the boys it was a more insistent part of their practice to wind each other up and thus both to intensify and police the anxieties associated with masculinity. Their practice - repeatedly reenacting being boys - combines the uncertainties of 'adolescent' positioning with a somewhat higher level of vulnerability to allegations of insufficient (hetero) sexuality than that evident, on this occasion, among the girls.

Implications for practice

In this chapter it has been important to engage with what students say 'about' popular music within the particular context of a teacher initiated discussion and 'group evaluation'. To engage with such talk, and to enable some

reflection on its socially tactical meanings, should be a continuing concern in teaching about popular music. However, what constitutes 'knowledge about music' is so variable, both across and within generations, that it is impossible to eliminate uncertainty and disjunction in such talk. The 'object of enquiry' - 'knowledge about music' - cannot be separated from the particular social relations of the event in which they gathered to discuss 'it'. As I have argued, the talk that has provided the data for this chapter should not be read, just sociologically, as evidence of 'gender differences' among the students (though in combination with other kinds of data it has that potential). The primary concern has been to consider how 'knowledge about music' is constituted within the context of group evaluations - and how within these 'events' the students have positioned themselves in relation to each other, to myself as their teacher and to the assessment 'task' required of them.

To varying degrees, all of these students were unwilling to 'invest' in any 'fixed' position and, to the contrary, sustained some degree of mobility among possible positions and the identities they might imply. For them, the priority appeared to be that of negotiating self-positions within the double context of an 'evaluation' and a gender exclusive peer group. With the complicated exception of Margaret, they seemed much less interested in proving themselves to be

capable of 'mature' debate, thus orientated to middle class adult forms of exchange, than concerned to be effective participants, survivors perhaps, in a performance where 'knowledge about music' is transient and tactical. For them, the primary urgency of the context, despite their implicit acknowledgement of its formality as an 'evaluation', was located in the social relations of the group. This is, as I have suggested, marked by some degree of gender differentiation in practices of self-representation, but across both groups 'knowledge' of popular music is somewhat ephemeral, framed by the occasion and by their uncertain or abbreviated educational trajectories.

I felt dissatisfied with these discussions, of course. As I have argued in the introduction to this chapter (and in Chapter 3), I chose to pursue a research focus within the relation between teacher and taught and, therefore, I placed myself in an uneasy social space. Thus positioned as a teacher, I felt frustrated that the students' 'knowledge' remained elusive and that the scope of their commentary on the assignment seemed so limited. I still hoped that, with less immediate, 'face-to-face', modes of self-representation, these students might bring into (my) view rather more of what they knew. But again, in retrospect, I could see that, thus located as a teacher, what I conceived of as 'knowledge', and wanted them to 'produce', did not correspond to the transient

and socially embedded forms of knowledge in circulation among these students. Their 'knowledge' seemed so intricately entwined with the negotiation of their immediate social relations, and thus so affectively 'charged', that it was clearly extremely difficult to get them to reflect upon such knowledge or, in Vygotsky's terms, to connect pre-existing spontaneous concepts with the 'scientific' concepts that Media Studies might offer (see Vygotsky, 1962; Buckingham, 1990; Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994). If I wanted 'collaborative reflection', and a focused 'group evaluation', what these encounters demonstrated was that such pedagogic intentions were largely frustrated by the social dynamics of the occasion. On the whole, the kinds of 'cultural capital' they appeared interested in displaying, and protecting, were not those which could be easily 'valued' in the educational context (Bourdieu, 1986; 1992). The logic of my frustration, for teaching, was to focus more minutely on other forms of articulation - as I do in the next chapter - and to consider other, further, alternatives to the social immediacy of discussion based attempts to talk about popular music. This logic, with its implications for practice, is followed through in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

Notes

1. In 1975, when I worked for the West Indian Supplementary Service, there was a brief period when I saw the same small group of students for much of every day. This was an exceptional moment in my teaching career though I didn't realize how exceptional until I entered full-time classroom teaching in 1979.

2. See, for example, the Mintel 'Market News' reports.

3. See Mungham, in Mungham and Pearson (1976); Frith (1983); McRobbie, (1991) and (1994); Roman, in Roman and Christian-Smith (1988); Brennan, and Bennett, in Brackenridge (1993); see also Thornton (1995).

4. See Richards, (1994) 'The English Curriculum: What's music got to do with it?'.

5. It is of some interest that 'During September 1994, Mintel commissioned exclusive consumer research from BRMB on aspects of audio-visual products in order to obtain up to date information on the ownership of these products across the demographic spectrum'. On the basis of the data, it is suggested that 'men are more likely to be attracted by up to date technology than women, whereas the women are, perhaps, more likely to suffer (sic) from technophobia and tend to be more concerned with ease of use'; and, further, 'men are more impressed than their (sic) womenfolk by the number of functions an audio-visual item possesses, and they are more likely to accept the recommendations of a consumer magazine in making a purchase.' BRMB/Mintel: Product: Audio-Visual Review - The Consumer.

6. Bourdieu, P. (1979) 'Public Opinion Does Not Exist', in A. Mattelart and S. Siegelaub (eds), *Communication and Class Struggle*, vol. 1, pp. 124-30, New York: International General. Quoted from Mander (1987): pp.127-8.

7. Willis (*et al*) suggest that: 'Whereas dancing used to be seen as something of a feminine activity by some working-class young men, it has become more acceptable for males to express themselves through body movement. Some of the ties between dance forms and codes of masculinity/femininity have been loosened'. (Willis *et al*, 1990: p.68)

8. Alan may have attempted to diminish the cultural prestige of black music by his comments on sampling and mixing (see Appendix 1).

9. Erasure seem to be read as (ambiguously?) gay and, among these boys, as inadequately masculine ('wimpish'). Boy George, most popular in the early 1980s, has a similarly ambiguous gay/bisexual image and is recalled as representing a particular fashion for 'cross-dressing'. Julian Clary is, in Britain, a successful, openly gay, TV presenter and comedian. He is also known for, sometimes spectacular, 'cross-dressing'.

10. The Flying Pickets does seem an obscure reference here but perhaps the link with The Housemartins has something to do with a cappella singing. Such singing, by men without instruments, might be construed as effeminate (cf. Green, 1997).

Chapter 5: Classroom Subjects

Introduction

In this chapter, I want to turn to the written assignments produced by the Hackney students in the Spring Term of 1993 and thus to data of a more formal kind. I want to examine how the students negotiated the 'invitation' to bring popular cultural knowledge into the production of work for assessment by their teachers. Once again, I am concerned with how they negotiate this within the institutional relation between teacher and taught. In reading their assignments I have drawn on the discussion of school genres offered by Hodge and Kress (1988) and, particularly, have focused on how signs belonging to non-school, popular and commercial genres, have been appropriated and reinflected in texts produced for assessment.

An example discussed by Hodge and Kress is worth outlining here, however briefly. They refer to a primary 'school project', in this case on the topic of 'Supermarkets', and argue that:

> The project, as a genre, demands that children attend to sets of relevance constructed by a powerful other, the teacher (although the teacher functions as mediator for the classifications of a larger 'discipline'). The project demands the assemblage of a text that brings together the relevant materials in the relevant order...(Hodge and Kress, 1988: p.249).

In discussion of pages from one girl's project, representing commodities sold in the supermarket, they point to the incorporation of food labels into her text, a process they call 'quotation':

> This metaphor of 'quotation' may serve to illustrate the child's relation to semiotic systems generally. On the one hand the child is always in the position of taking existing signs from semiotic systems and 'quoting' them in her own semiotic uses; on the other hand, she is therefore also in the position of 'reproducing' signs when she uses them in their 'own' text...
>
> The problem is particularly compounded for the child as these signs are at a great 'distance' from her own semiotic experience. The mode of production of these labels/signs is remote from her in every way; it is a process known to those who have power. At the same time therefore the use of these ready-made signs promises to confer power to her text. Bringing signs of that complexity into her text promises both some control and power for her text. That is of course quite like the use of powerful indexical words in certain domains in the speech or writing of those who wish to gain power by indicating their membership of particular groups. (Hodge and Kress, 1988: p.251).

A key aspect of my argument in this chapter is that varying degrees of power are recognized, by the students, in the genres available to them. Faced with a school based task - producing an assignment for assessment - but simultaneously invited to emulate specific commercial genres associated with the music business, how do these students negotiate these demands? In what ways do they position themselves through the forms available to them and what forms of power are claimed from those positions? A part of the answer to these questions can be formulated by approaching their Media

Studies assignment as, like the 'Supermarkets' primary school project, a genre in which the disparity between different domains of power - the school and the music industry - can be explored and manipulated by school students.

The class had been asked to produce a variety of items publicizing and 'packaging' a new, previously unknown, 'artist'.[1] The starting point was an array of photocopied and cropped images of young women and just one man - images drawn from fashion magazines and intended to be both anonymous but generically close to 'pop iconography'. We didn't listen to any music and my intention was rather that they adapt the images to represent music of interest to them. They were also asked to do some very small scale investigation into the listening habits of people of their own age and, on the basis of their findings, to plan a promotion of their new 'artist' addressed to the later teenage 'market'. All of this was familiar for them and for me: a way of working with popular cultural material in a context where visual dimensions have been emphasised and where the wish to teach about institutional power is realized through varying degrees of 'simulation' (for example, Blanchard, Greenleaf and Sefton-Green, 1989). In a sense they were set up to model their work on that of professional marketing and, appropriately, they judged both the task, and their own efforts, somewhat in terms of what they perceived effective promotion to involve.

Within the history of Media Studies in schools, teachers have tended to favour explanations for this approach which stress its capacity to sharpen the students' awareness of the ways in which they are addressed by the media. They have not, on the whole, thought of themselves as teaching their students to be 'good at' these commercial practices. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere (Richards, 1997), the separation of 'culture' from 'commerce' in English teaching, and its traces in the related development of Media Studies, is a continuing and powerful force in some teachers' understanding of themselves and their intentions.

Such a division can produce some especially marked disjunctions between teachers' valuations of students' work and the students' own interest in what they produce. As will be apparent in the assignments which are discussed in this chapter, school students may articulate claims to subjective identity, and a kind of 'cultural authenticity', in commercial forms read, by teachers, as completely incapable of carrying such meanings. For example, the production of forms of black music may involve simultaneous claims to both commercial power and cultural identity which still, in school, might be regarded as contradictory. In the early 1970s, David Morse defended Motown (Morse, 1971) against the accusations that 'commercialization' produced cultural 'inauthenticity' - and thus, by the way, as my favourite

tutor in American Literature, undermined my continuing 'adolescent' division of black music between the opposed poles of 'folk' and 'commercial'. More recently, Andrew Ross (1989) has made a similar case:

> I will...call attention to the fragments of another, less idealized history, one that is linked to the capacity of popular music to transmit, disseminate, and render visible "black" meanings, *precisely because of*, and not in spite of, its industrial forms of production, distribution, and consumption. These commercial forms, whether on record or in performance, were, after all, the actual historical channels through which "black" meanings were made widely available, and were received and used by a popular audience, even a black audience. There is little comfort in this other history for purists, but then the cultural and social changes that are mediated by shifts in popular taste are always messy, and never pure; as a result, they are seldom canonized as decisive, and more usually regarded as epiphenomena of *real* changes, which always take place elsewhere. (Ross, 1989: p.71).

The readings I want to offer in this chapter, and particularly of Cheryl's assignment, depend upon a challenge to 'purism' and involve a degree of reflexive self-critique for teachers formed, like myself, in the academic literary culture of the 1960s and 70s. Ross's argument is one which raises crucial questions for teachers considering what kind of history of popular music might be constructed in taking students beyond the immediacy of their own present tastes. The tendency to order such a history in terms of folk origins and commercial appropriation is, whatever the coherence of academic critiques (see Middleton, 1990), one which the teachers[2] I talked to might still find difficult to resist.

It should be emphasised that this tension is not only an issue in the work of black students in the group.[3] For example, the assignments produced by Margaret and by Alan, discussed later in the chapter, will offer further illustration, and complication, of this issue. But, in provisional summary, I want to reiterate that teachers may tend to operate with an overarching binary division between commerce and culture whereas most of their students are preoccupied with marking distinctions between the authentic and the inauthentic *within* commercial popular culture itself (cf. Frith, 1983; Thornton, 1995).

I want to turn now to say a little more about questions of sexuality and of gender. These dimensions reappear here both in the students' relation to classroom work and in their generic preferences, aspects of which are evident in the assignment material. Of course I selected the images with which I wanted them to work - I too am implicated in this. To some extent, Media Studies has interested me just because it appeared to engage with cultural forms otherwise excluded from, and regarded as disruptive of, the formal school curriculum and its contribution to a power/knowledge relation in which young people are positioned as 'juvenile' (cf. Mac an Ghaill, 1994). Media Studies, perhaps in common with Drama, continues to render more permeable the boundary

between school identities as 'pupils' and the range of social identities either claimed by, or available to, young people elsewhere. Allowing such permeability can be regarded as a 'recognition', by teachers, of sexuality as a domain of which students are entitled to speak, not one only 'known' to, and thus controlled by, adults and into which supposedly pre-sexual subjects are introduced. But this also has a regulatory dimension as, through such permeability, teachers are able to know more about those they teach (cf. Bernstein, 1975). However, there is a case for suggesting that, if sexuality intrudes more fully into classroom discourse with the turn in attention to popular culture, it can thus compel teachers to address students less as 'children' than as, like themselves, participants in a culture which, as Foucault (1976) has argued, speaks endlessly of sex (see Wolpe, 1988; McRobbie, 1991; Richards, 1990; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). In Media Studies then, the knowledge called into play so often includes a sexual component that it is hard to see how teachers could continue to sustain a clear division between themselves as 'knowing' and their students as 'innocent'.

Sara

These issues can now be given a more particular focus through some examples from the students' work. Sara described the images I offered in this way:

> Photograph 1 - This photograph is of a white man, who's middle aged but fit looking hes standing between two men dressed in dark clothes they both

have cloth like turbans on there head, They look like there from the middle East probably Muselim. One of the men is pointing out something to the white man who's looking very concearned. My guess is he's a Journalist or reporter of some sort.
This photograph would not make the cover of any record. [*See Figure 1: White Man*]

Photograph 2 - This is a picture of a young white woman. The photograph shows only her head and shoulders. She's dressed in a black laceie top with holes in it underneath is bare skin. Her hair is piled on top of her head with wind blowing to give an effect this photograph looks like she's a model posing for a clean make-up advert.
This photograph could be the cover of a record, something like Gloria Estefan the style of music would be South American/Cuban beat some type of pop music. [*See Figure 2: Young White Woman*]

Photograph 3 - This is a photograph of a young black woman. The photograph is of her body down to her thighs. Shes wearing black collotes with a gold chain belt, she has a white shirt with large bottons only one of which is done up, the rest are undone which means we can see the beginning of one of her breasts. She also has on a black short jaguet one hand is in her pocket and the other is out streatched in front of her. She's in a side pose. This could make the cover of a record for a soul single. [*See Figure 3: Young Black Woman*]

Photograph 4 - This is the same woman as above. She's in a front pose. She's wearing a white shirt, which looks like a wrap over the photograph has been taken just as she's swang round so her top is open so we can see one of her breasts. Her mouth is open and she's looking stright at the camera.
This photograph could be used on the front of a single for a pop song. [*See Figure 4: Young Black Woman, Turning*]

Photograph 5 - This photograph is the top half a black woman. She's standing with her hands at her sides facing foward She has a wild hairstyle which is all different lengths and in all different directions. She's wearing a sleeveless leather top which looks rock hard.
This photograph could be used on a single for a hardcore tune. [*See Figure 5: Black Woman/Leather Top*]

> Photograph 6 - This photograph is something of a Demi Moore look. Theres a young woman with short hair sitting down with her back hunched foward She's wearing a white tee-shirt and white trousers, over her shoulders, she has a white blanket which gives the impression her heads sticking out of a wall. Her arms are resting on her knees and in her hands shes holding a cup. This photograph could be used on a single, to portray a clean softie girl next door pop image (sort of Kylie Monogue when she first started in the pop world) [*See Figure 6: A Demi Moore Look*]
>
> Photograph 7 - This photograph is the top half of a young woman, she's standing facing foward with her arms lifted behind her head, she's wearing gloves and a bra so her arms and stomach are bare. Just below her belly botton is a belt then theres a gap of bare skin then another article of clothing which we can't see. Her head is slightly tilted and her eyes are closed. Her hair is just below shoulder length and the style looks like bones or dents of some sort. She would make the ideal cover for a hard core single - its the one I chose. [*See Figure 7: Young Woman/Arms Lifted*]

This quite lengthy set of descriptions needs to be placed within both the social relations of the classroom and the various genres she negotiates. In her description of the (provided) images there is a kind of dutiful and efficient replication of the dispassionate dissection often encouraged in Media Studies but, in her dismissal of one image and decisive placing of others, there is also an implicit self-positioning as a knowledgeable participant in popular music culture. Each of her descriptions is methodical and systematic: identification in terms of gender, age and 'race' is followed by comments upon framing and posture and, further, by details of dress. The procedures of image analysis, taught so widely in Media Studies, are evident in

this attempt to sustain description (denotation) without interpretation (connotation). 'Interpretation', to the extent that it is offered, is here collapsed into a designation of the functional context from which the image may have been derived: 'a Journalist or reporter of some sort'; 'a model posing for a clean make-up advert'. But, in concluding each description, she places each image quite firmly in a taxonomy of musical genres (South American/Cuban beat, pop, soul, hardcore) and without explicitly justifying the alignment of image and genre. Her self-presentation as a 'motivated' student, competent to produce the forms of writing required, is thus held in some tension with this lack of explicitness in her criteria for assigning images to musical genres. To be explicit, and thus to seek legitimation in the school context, is not, in this moment, conceded; the rhetorical authority of her judgements is achieved through their brevity, and implicit self-assurance. She writes from within a culture to which she can assume teachers do not belong. She is thus able to occupy a position of some relative power in which the balance of forces determining the production of her writing tilts, in one moment, her way, in another, back to the teacher. Indeed, in concluding her study she added an unrequested glossary, explaining terms such as 'hardcore' and 'rave' and thus placing her addressee as the recipient of knowledge over which she has some control and, at the same time, placing herself as a capable classroom subject - both

subject to, and subject/agent of, this act of formal explanation.

To frame a further reading of her assignment, it is worth pausing to look at her cover. The cover sheet was handwritten, carefully, but on a descending, slightly erratic, diagonal: 'Media Studies....Music-Audience Assignment....By Sara...'. To the left of the diagonal, in the bottom half of the A4 sheet, she pasted a photoreduction of her chosen image, tilted so that a line bisecting the figure - through the face vertically and down beyond the navel - would run approximately parallel to the diagonal axis of her title.

This is an assignment embedded in a transaction between myself as a male teacher and mostly working-class girls drawing upon a discourse of 'adolescent' sexuality (cf. McRobbie, 1991) and, in a majority of cases, 'quoting' images which I provided and thus legitimated in the classroom context. As I have argued in the preceding chapter, and as others have suggested (see, for example, Wolpe 1988), it is of some importance to girls positioned in 'adolescence' to be seen by male teachers as rather closer to being adult women than to school children. How does this inform my reading of her work? Most of what the school genre 'assignment' requires as formal identification and differentiation is

present on the cover but it is controlled by the image. Indeed the raised arms provide an axis which crosses the parallel diagonals to direct the reader's look to the title 'Media-Audience-Assignment'. This suggests a balancing of compliance as a student with the power of a 'quoted' image, strongly emblematic of a particular female sexuality. It is also possible to read this as, therefore, a double compliance: an acceptance of both pedagogic and (hetero) sexual positioning. And thus the power achieved through quotation is circumscribed, limited to inscription within feminine hetero-sexuality (recall, though, that she has been asked to produce something which will 'sell' an artist).

Without undermining this reading, which I think is persuasive, I do also want to suggest that, given her position as a school student, her use of the image is also an assertion which disturbs the educational frame in which her knowledge, and her school identity, are supposedly contained. Like many of the girls involved, she appeared to enjoy some aspects of the work or to want to say so in a particular way:

> This assignment was the best we've ever done in Media Studies. It was fun to do and easy to get research material because its what the children in school are "in to" (the latest craze). Doing the questionnaire was the most fun it wasn't like work, it was just like talking to your friends about their music interests.....The hardest part was chosing the artist and finding a name for her, the group and the song. I settled for Hardcore Erotica as the group name and Kiss as the name of the artist and single.

In this, 'fun', if accompanying rather than displacing work, appears to register an experience of herself as more legitimately social, as more involved with others, than is usual within school. At the same time, she moves, with no acknowledged contradiction, from appearing to be one of the 'children in school' to the choice of 'Hardcore Erotica' and 'Kiss' as names for her group, and her artist and single. I have already discussed the connotations of 'hardcore' and here the most sexual meanings are privileged by its conjunction with 'erotica'. However, the images she accords a place in her map of music culture are all representations of female sexuality and the sole photograph of a man was dismissed, implicitly, for belonging to an inappropriate genre - journalism. 'Hardcore Erotica' is, in her work, given a distinctively female inflection.

Her chosen image was incorporated into a collage - for the cover of a CD single - which she described, in a simulated review for *Just Seventeen*, thus: 'This single has a wicked front cover with Kiss in more clothes than usual reading between the lines its gonna be a fast seller'. Here, she writes as someone addressing the audience to which she would define herself as belonging - teenage girls - and adopts what appears to be a self-consciously coded style, implying the sexual intent of the collage in a way which suggests a strongly shared understanding between writer and reader but,

equally, a mutually recognized need to be oblique - as if to deflect the attention of adults, in the mode of address common to the problem pages of teenage magazines. Such a repositioning of herself somewhat beyond her location within the social relations of the classroom contains more than an expression of 'adolescent sexuality' - which might be dismissed as both familiar and predictable. There is a claim to knowledge here and to the power that might imply. In this respect, such knowledge, which includes a knowledge of sexuality, can suggest how differently people of 15 and 16 might be placed within Media Studies - relative to other areas of the curriculum.

Sara's CD collage [*See Figure 8*] is an exercise in redundancy and saturation, layering together elements convergent in meaning. The 'hardcore' figure is this time angled along an axis descending from top left to bottom right but is significantly fragmented and concealed by glossy female lips to the lower left, a large X to the upper right, and the word KISS tilted from mid abdomen and down into the bottom right hand corner. The word LOVE is placed at the top of the frame immediately above the 'dancer' and, directly below, at the bottom of the frame, another glossy female mouth. Other components, forming a 'background', include the old His Master's Voice logo and an 'expressively' drawn image of Madonna with jutting breast cones (and the words 'Protect

Your Assets - Madonna Does'). Despite, or more probably because of, the singular intent here, the collage, framed approximately as a CD cover, is effective in its obsessive visual design - the X (kiss/forbidden) is replicated for example in the larger composition so that the converging diagonals of the dancer's raised arms combine with the diagonals formed by the white ground of the word KISS, and thus the whole frame is organized by a large X.

Within Media Studies, and perhaps in Art, the 'collage' has become a familiar vehicle for the 'quotation' of bodily, and other sexually significant, imagery. In the marketing of music and other commodities, variants of 'collage' also have wide currency - combining familiar generic signifiers, or star images, with other often dissonant elements. Her collage is therefore both imitation of a commercial strategy and fulfilment of an already familiar school task. In this case the reproduction of preformed images in her text enables her, simultaneously, to meet the demands of a school and a commercial genre. But, whatever her success in meeting such requirements, this collage might be construed as *only* further acquiescence in the positioning of women as sexual objects. Her own comments, in her evaluation, seem to confirm this:

> Kiss (my artist) was the only one out of the photographs we were given that could be used on a hardcore single, it might have been something to do with the sterotype for hard-core singers. The pose she's in surgests 'look at me' her eyes are closed so we don't have the idea that she's looking at us but that we're looking at her. She's showing a lot

> of her body, her arms are open behind her head representing a pose such as 'take me'.

This is exactly the analysis one would expect a GCSE Media Studies student, carefully taught to 'deconstruct' advertising and magazine images from a kind of feminist position, to offer in writing - as proof of her competence in the discipline. The woman's body as object of (male) desire, arranged to satisfy such a (male) gaze, is, in those terms, adequately described. But what else might it mean to her and in what sense has she enjoyed 'appropriating' this image?

> I'm not a great artist so I never wanted to draw the front cover that's when I came up with the idea of cutting pictures out of magazines. I could see it in my head as being really bright but that never happen. The cut out pictures all came from *Just Seventeen* and the photograph of my artist was reduced on the photocopier. The front cover isn't just a load of cut out pictures there was some thought (it had to attract the right audience) in it especially with the lips and the word kiss. I also thought the X would symbolise a kiss but not many people understood that and it had to be explained...(I'm very proud of my front cover).

I want to argue that her CD cover, the collage, in combination with her evaluative commentary, enables her to occupy mutually contradictory positions. She holds firmly to her position as a competent student of Media Studies, thus to be approved by her (male) teachers: 'there was some thought (it had to attract the right audience)'. But she also suggests that she is more sexually knowing than many others, and therefore also places herself as, implicitly, more 'mature', more adult: 'I also thought the X would symbolise a

kiss but not many people understood that and it had to be explained...'. For girls, to 'please' male teachers in this way need not involve any intractable conflict (however, see McRobbie, 1991). The sense of division in Sara's 'self-presentation' is more apparent in her selection and manipulation of the 'hardcore' image. If as a student she is critical of the image - a 'stereotype' - she did choose it and her comments suggest fascination, a pleasure in the image as a kind of narcissistic ideal, not what she is but the body she might wish to inhabit.

Elsewhere, in a discussion of the popularity of *The Little Mermaid* and of a current iconography of dance, I have suggested that images of this kind are incorporated into young girls' play and might be taken up as a fantasy of the embodied self-in-control (Richards, 1995). Sara's account might usefully be juxtaposed with my own. First, Sara:

> ...her arms lifted behind her head, she's wearing gloves and a bra so her arms and stomach are bare. Just below her belly botton is a belt then theres a gap of bare skin then another article of clothing which we can't see... the ideal cover for a hard core single - its the one I chose.

And my own comments:

> Dancing to Madonna is about projecting the self into, taking the form of, her body. To achieve this seems to depend upon reorganising the child's body to mark out the place of breasts and the nakedness of the belly...
>
> Arms raised above the head to display the breasts and belly, even if encased in mock armour or underwear, represent the crucial stance...Perhaps, despite the patriarchal structure in which dancing

> is located...for girls there is a visible proof of bodily autonomy and self-control implicit in being seen to dance, to present a body enacting intention. (Richards, 1995: p.147)

Of course, my analysis is speculative but, in the larger context of debates around the meanings of dance for women and girls, it is reasonable to suggest here that Sara's choice of the image implies *both* some complicity with positioning as a sexual object and some degree of more reflexive pleasure in the embodied (female) self (see Brennan, 1993; Thomas, 1993; McRobbie, 1994; Thornton, 1995; Frith, 1996; Whiteley, 1997).

I want to move on now to discuss, with varying degrees of detail, each of the girls' assignments in turn. It is important to note, before doing so, that not only were these assignments addressed to male teachers, but they were also quite 'public' within the context of the classroom and could be read by others as evidence of 'tastes'. The reading of each others' work among the groups of girls was a common activity and there was thus some conversation within and between groups of girls (documented in my classroom notes - see Chapter 4) - conversations which, if they seemed to be mutually supportive of each others' efforts, were also therefore a significant context in which they could expect their work to be judged (see Hey, 1995; 1997).

Asiye

Asiye produced a thoughtful and meticulous assembly of materials: unhappy with the images offered to her, she chose her own. Her image was eventually selected to represent an apparent preoccupation with 'love songs':

> The name I have decided to give my singer is Isabella Marell. The reasons for this is because of the way she looks, the name suits her and blends with the type of song I have chosen for her to sing. I chose several song titles for her to sing but decided in the end on 'I look into your eyes'. Other song titles I thought of include 'I look into your face', 'Remembering you', 'Look at me' and 'Can I love you'. The reasons for choosing these song titles are because they are all to do with love and the theme for her song is love songs. Isabella looks the type to sing love song rather than other types of music like raggae, acid, rave funk, hardcore etc. I chose her because of the type of song she is most likely to sing. I had decided on love songs before I had seen her so I thought she fitted best with the type of song chosen for her. [*See Figure 9: Isabella*]

Sara chose the image of a woman with her eyes closed and much of her body displayed to an implied onlooker. By contrast, Asiye's image connotes a look which is inter-subjective, rather than a look at the body (either from the vantage point of an other or in reflection). She included fourteen copies of the image, some with the name 'Isabella', some without. Her assignment thus *repeats* the image of the face, implicitly reiterating her song-titles: 'I look into your eyes', 'I look into your face', 'Remembering you', 'Look at me' and 'Can I love you'. These are strongly relational, in marked contrast to the disembedded 'Kiss'.[4] In fact, her image was more

like that found in, or on the cover of, magazines addressed to adult women. In this respect, she appropriated an image which is at an even greater distance from 'teenage culture' than those I supplied to them. Thus, though it is possible to argue that she too lays claim to an image of adult sexuality, her choice is one which suggests a different relation to images of women in popular culture.

Unlike Sara, whose endorsement of hardcore was common among white monolingual students, Asiye seemed to locate herself in a genre of popular music to which many of the other girls would claim no connection, not because - like Take That - it was associated with younger girls, but because it seems undifferentiated by any 'youth' audience claims upon it. It may be that, from a more marginalized ethnic position than many of the other girls, Asiye was unable, because she lacked the more detailed knowledge, to differentiate herself through endorsement of an 'off-centre' genre. Though, in earlier discussions, she identified herself as listening to Capital, one of London's most popular pop radio stations (see Appendix 1), here she chose an image which, in her presentation of it, would be far closer to the genre of light romantic songs promoted by the 'Euro-Vision Song Contest'. It is possible that in choosing such a genre, and the name 'Isabella', she was constructing an 'ideal' through which, to the extent that she might position herself within the terms of that ideal,

she could enact a disavowal of ethnicity (cf. Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994: pp.64-73, on 'Hardcore Harry').[5]

For a majority of the class, both girls and boys, there was some degree of coincidence between sexual identifications and musical genres (see Chapter 4). In selecting a genre, therefore, judgements were made which also entailed a representation of a sexual self to others. And as Weeks (1981) has suggested, after Foucault, 'sexuality' has been constructed, historically, as the 'truth of ourselves'. In my interview with Richard's colleague, Alison, some particularly salient observations on this point were made:

> ...it's a very sensitive area because it's so personal and I know how I feel about...I mean I put up a display of my own album covers and I know how I feel about people coming in and making fun of them...I feel, I sort of, I take it personally because they're mine and like I think, that's, see, the Wham! video is a useful thing to study because actually the kids do quite like George Michael but nobody is a really big fan of his any more so nobody feels hurt if people criticize it, on the other hand they sneakingly quite like it because it's got good dance routines and they don't mind saying 'Oh I quite like that' rather like if you were watching an old black and white movie, somebody might say 'Oh you know that bit's good' and so it is quite good to study things that are a bit more distant from everybody, that nobody's got a big kind of investment in... [section omitted] ...the Madonna unit was actually quite, it's interesting but it's quite problematic because of the sort of, y'know it brings out a lot of different opinions and people aren't respectful towards each other like...many of the girls have gone off her or say they've gone off her, don't want to be associated with her but used to like her and so it's sort of, it's a delicate area really because it's involved with, it's sort of y'know, because it's involved with teenage sexuality in a way isn't it really...if you think back to our own

> teenage days, music was so much part of the scene you were on...

There is quite a lot of discomfort here. Alison was by no means new to teaching and had been at the Hackney comprehensive for several years. She was extremely wary of teaching which might produce highly disruptive emotional responses among her students and a lingering difficulty for herself as a teacher (cf. Williamson, 1981/82; Richards, 1990; Buckingham, Grahame and Sefton-Green, 1995). In fact, she never did allow me to enter her classroom and it was not her class with which I was allowed to work. Her sense of self-exposure in displaying a collection of album covers, in revealing a liking for what others might reject was, even for her as a teacher, painful. For 'adolescents', in the public space of a classroom, the risks are undoubtedly considerable. It is quite plausible, then, to suggest that for Asiye, it was just safe 'to do' romantic pop, even if she had no particular attachment to it.

Claire

Claire, a white girl, also chose her own image. Among the girls, she was probably the least strongly orientated towards the assignment genre, appearing to enjoy the opportunity to 'do music', without too much concern for self-positioning as a conscientious student. Her cover sheet declared, in large hand written letters set against an angular, explosively

graphic, background - POWER OF MUSIC. Below, in smaller capital letters, she placed her name and, immediately below that, in a smaller, plain, hand-writing - Media Studies. She wrote no evaluation and there was virtually no commentary or explanation relating to the various elements which she did complete. Without the range of items assembled in the other assignments (by the girls at least), I have found her work much more difficult to comment on than that of any other student in the group.

In fact, for Claire, I doubt that the assessment of her work by her teachers was of much importance relative to her interest in music. For example, she positioned herself through music in ways which teachers normally regard as disruptive. She was one of several students who, from time to time, attempted to listen to music in the classroom, usually with a personal stereo (cf. Du Gay, 1997). On one occasion, Claire drew me, with somewhat hushed confidentiality, into listening to some rap (Ice-Cube taped from Kiss FM) and, on another occasion, lent me a cassette she had been given as a Christmas present:

> hard fax 2 - twice the vice! 28 clubscene floorfillers featuring: rotterdam termination source - bizarre inc. - rage - wag ya tail - messiah - altern-8 - sunscreem - liberation - the shamen - franke - urban hype - the aloof - plus...*(hard fax 2*, various artists, Columbia - 1992 Sony Music Entertainment (UK) Ltd.)

She did not name this music generically and it is important to recall that it was Claire who had pointed out that the generic terms used in current music journalism could be both unknown to her and refer to music to which she does listen. It was apparent, therefore, that how audiences name and define the boundaries of musical genres would vary in accord with the combination of other media discourses with which they might be familiar (cf. Thornton, 1995; Frith, 1996). It is also possible that Claire was 'doing music as subculture', implying that the music she was into might be elusive and unnameable - or as yet unnamed by the particular sector of music journalism to which I had access. Going somewhat beyond those others who argued that 'you can't describe it, you have to listen to it', she seemed more inclined to locate her identity in listening to music and outside classroom discourse. Unlike Margaret, she did not represent herself in terms of a middle-class inflection of 'hip' and seemed unimpressed by pressure to reformulate her experience in appropriately educational terms. Thus, read from the perspective offered by Kress, it is possible to see Claire as uninterested in being 'repositioned':

> The education process is about the processes of classification, repositioning individuals with respect to potent social/cultural classificatory systems, re-ordering the classificatory systems of those who are the learners. Power is involved at every point in that process, in the struggle over particular terms, over whose classificatory systems are to prevail, whose are to be valued and whose are to be dismissed. (Kress, 1985: p.63).

Her stance could be characterised as 'resistant' but, to be honest about this, I think that she just didn't see any need, or want to bother, to project herself into a position from which to 'reclassify' her informal enjoyment of music.

I want to turn now, if somewhat briefly, to the visual material she did complete. She chose an image of a young black woman, apparently dancing, framed from around the thighs upwards, turned, as if caught in motion, towards the onlooker, smiling fully, hair loose, a chain and pendant resting between her breasts, defined by a long dark jacket. She wrote, in various styles suggestive of display poster conventions - 'Jessica on Tour From April 28th...The new album "Money can't buy Love" on video out now' - and thus placed the image as 'satisfying' the requirement to produce a publicity poster for a tour and a related album release. [*See Figure 10: Jessica*]

Her CD cover [*See Figure 11: Montage*] makes no use of this image. It is, probably, a parodic montage: the central motif is composed of three images - a young woman alone, unsmiling; a couple beginning to embrace; a close-up of the same couple kissing. This central image is surrounded by grotesque cartoon figures, reminiscent of medieval gargoyles, each signifying - necessarily, given their exclusion - various caricatured emotions of envy, frustration and voyeuristic

excitement. There are, additionally, two saint figures displaying astonishment and disapproval. Superimposed are the words 'Money!' and 'buy Love'. Music is signified by a cartoon radio and by the words '20 Lurv Songs'. The central image looks as if it came from a teenage magazine and reproduces the heterosexual scenario once familiar in their photostories (see McRobbie, 1994). Is this a somewhat distanced, parodic, comment on romantic love songs? How does this connect with 'Jessica' and the song 'Money can't buy Love'?

Claire did also produce a storyboard for a promotional video. The setting is a dancehall. 'Money can't buy Love' fills the opening frame, to be followed by a frame in which the 'two lovers' are at the centre of a dance floor, and behind them a large heart. The third frame repeats the 'two lovers' but with Jessica singing on stage in the immediate background. The fourth and fifth frames are captioned: 'they are getting on rell well'; 'some of his friends come over to them'. There is then a 'flashback' to the first frame: 'Money can't buy Love'. The following eight frames are captioned thus:

(7) back to the lovers/his mates says something to him and leve the girl out
(8) his friends leve
(9) they finish their dance
(10) he tells her that he loves her and he's got to go
(11) he gives her a kiss and some money
(12) he leves her holding the money in her hand

(13) she is in the middel of the dance and all the lovers dancing around her
(14) back to Jessica finnishing one song
(15) flashback - Money can't buy love

There is a significant, and familiar, tension here: between heterosexual coupling and the power of male friendship groups to reclaim the girl's partner. One reading of this narrative would argue that the girl is left alone, with a manipulative gift of money, and implicitly where humiliation is public and visible. It might follow that recognition and empathy is offered by 'Jessica' and the 'knowing' song she sings. The image of 'Jessica' used for the tour poster could be read, therefore, as a fantasy of the self, less vulnerable to, and uncompromised by, desire for a male other. But in the final frame the word 'can't' is unclear, as if 'can' has been written over it. This would imply a cynical twist to the narrative and displace an empathetic relation between Jessica and the girl with an ironic disparity. This would be confirmed by the apparent omission of the word 'can't' from her CD cover. These ambiguities must remain unresolved and, as I have suggested, were perhaps characteristic of Claire's relative lack of interest in completing the task within its prescribed terms. Whatever the case, it is important to conclude this account of her work by emphasising that, though her assignment shows some fluency in the manipulation of 'teen romance', what she has produced is also uncertain and puzzling, not just because that was the way she wanted to

represent herself but also because she was constrained, no doubt, by the resources that happened to be available to her.

Cheryl

Cheryl, a black girl, seemed far more inclined to seek an 'educational future' beyond compulsory schooling than Claire (cf. Mac an Ghaill, 1994: p.150). She produced work which was striking in that it combined a very strong self-presentation as a student with a determination to appropriate the task on her terms. She presented her assignment with a simple computer graphic - Media Studies Assignment by Cheryl... - and, unusually, placed her evaluation at the beginning. She thus orientated the reader - her teachers - at the outset and gave considered, rather dispassionate, reasons for what she had done. However, she made no use of the images provided and selected instead a variety of shots of, apparently, the same young black woman to whom she gave the name 'Riazz'. Riazz, on her CD cover dressed in white shorts, white halter and white peaked cap, is presented smiling with her hands shoved in her pockets, the single title perhaps also describing her presence: 'Fresh 'n' Funky' [*See Figure 12: Fresh 'n' Funky*]. In her 'evaluation', she located Riazz thus:

> I chose soul with a twist of other elements of music for my character to specialise in because I believed that she isn't the kind of person to sing pop i.e. Kylie and Jason, plus she looked like the kind of person who could sing the style of En Vogue or Mary J. Blige...

The distinctions she makes are between both genres and identities: she adds that 'the first person I chose didn't go well with the music I wanted to match her with...' and, in her effort to align image and music, she appears to be attributing an ontology to her 'character' and thus to imply an expressive authenticity in the relation between performer and song. Her review of Riazz's album Speechless, authored by 'David Samson' for *Smash Hits*, elaborates her identity and her musical provenance in a variety of black musical genres:

> Riazz: the woman who gave soul a new name has now produced an album which includes the smash hit 'Fresh 'n' Funky'.
> The L.p includes the slow and sensual 'You're breaking my heart' and the velvety but more up beat song 'Love don't make the world go round'.
> Guest stars such as Salt 'n' Pepa, Bobby Brown and Jamacan star Buju Banton appear on the album accompaning her by rapping, M. Cing and singing like you've never heared them before.
> If you like Hip hop, Ragga, Swing beat and Soul, this album is definitley for you, it is entertainable, up beat aswell as slushy and most importantly it is danceable.
> Overall if I had to rate it out of ten I would give it an eight.
> Riazz has definitly got alot of potential for 1993.

In this generic mix, elements of British, Caribbean and American black musical cultures are assembled around a figure whose name is itself a kind of hybrid, blurring cultural differences but within familiar black pop conventions (cf. Boyz II Men, Yazz, Jazzie B., or Yo-Yo). Like Stephen, Cheryl can be understood as locating herself within the culture of the black Atlantic diaspora (Gilroy, 1993).

As I have suggested in the introduction to this chapter, the combination of market oriented contrivance and claims to subjective depth may be read as paradoxical from the vantage point of teachers formed in the discipline of literary criticism (see Eagleton, 1983). To the contrary, I want to suggest that in Cheryl's work, the 'authenticity' of a black identity is both a condition of the coherence of her 'market representations' and that her reproduction of those representations is, recursively, a confirmation of the cultural power of such an identity. For example, the reverse side of her CD single cover is remarkable in its careful, graphically precise, reproduction of packaging rhetoric:

> Side a Fresh 'n' Funky Side B You're Breaking My Heart
> Produced and Arranged by Ashley Banks.
> Excutive producers Vibe Entertainment + Diva Sparks. Programming by Chanel Parkinson.
> Engineered by Rahim at N.Y Studio's.
> Assistant Engineer Scott "Racoon" Canton.
> Mastered at Westside Mastering Labs Inc.
> Management Vibe Entertainment
> Management in Association with Ella Shiffon. GOYE

This text is accompanied by three small images of Riazz. The reproduction of a set of signifiers borrowed from an attractive commodity is itself a claim to an authenticity which, in this Media Studies assignment, is more intensely valued - by the students - than the reproduction of the formal features of the specific school genre. Here, therefore, the presentation of these market features is, in the display of such a particular knowledge, to assert the

cultural power of specifically black commodities. This is a more politically inflected instance of the 'quotation' of supermarket/commodity labels discussed earlier (Kress and Hodge, 1988). The identity of the student is allied with, and distinguished through, a position within that other, non-educational, domain - the black commercial culture of music - a domain in which the favoured image is again that of an 'un-coupled' but sexually mature woman.

Cheryl's storyboard for the 'Fresh 'n' Funky' video begins with a girl falling asleep in bed. In the second frame 'she wakes up on a hot tropical island' (numerous palm trees in the background); in the third, the 'camera rotates and pans clockwise. Girl spins round'; in the fourth, the words 'Fresh 'n' Funky' appear like graffiti on a wall ('close shot of big wall with scribbled graffiti'). The fifth frame is a 'close shot of a man clicking his fingers. Music starts'. The sixth, 'Girl falls in front of the graffitied wall and discovers two cartoon characters standing next to her. The seventh, 'All three of them start dancing'. In the eighth frame, 'She touches both of them and the cartoon characters turn human.' In the ninth, 'She finishes dancing then walks off. The two boys keep dancing.' The four remaining frames introduce a new setting: tenth frame, 'Shot of children playing'; eleventh frame, 'She plays double dutch with some girls'; twelfth frame, 'It's time for her to go, she waves goodbye to the

children'; thirteenth frame, 'She wakes from her dream back in her bed'. This is a familiar scenario in pop videos.[6] The use of dreamlike dislocations of space and time and the mixing and transformation of human and cartoon characters is, of course, quite commonplace (see Goodwin, 1993: pp.76-7). However, it is, like Claire's storyboard, a narrative in which a girl dances but ends, once again, alone.

There are problems, as I noted in discussing Claire's work, in 'reading' material of this kind. But, to the extent that it is the girl's dream, it can be argued that it therefore privileges her subjectivity: her presence determines transitions from one setting to another; her music and her touch seemingly transform the cartoon animals into boys. Nevertheless, she leaves them, to reappear in a playground where she engages in a game with a group of girls. If the girl is Riazz, the tropical island and the graffitied wall are consistent with the signification of black cultural geography; but the locations are not strongly specified and tend to overlap each other. The narrative is ambivalent in that it appears to move towards a heterosexual romance scenario but, midway, abandons any continuation of dancing with the boys to return to something more like a childhood scene. It is, like Claire's narrative, a generically familiar negotiation of the boundary between childhood (being with friends) and the achievement of heterosexuality (being

coupled). The girl seems to exercise both power in dancing and freedom in withdrawing and walking away. It is, then, a narrative which, from the position of an 'adolescent' girl, in between childhood and adulthood, can be read as a tentative engagement in a sexualized world, an engagement which is articulated through the discontinuities of pop video rather than the linear inevitability of teen romance.

Gemma

I want to look at the work of three more girls before discussing the boys' involvement in the production of these assignments. Gemma, Margaret and Abby are all white. Gemma produced an assignment centred on the same figure chosen by Sara - that of the 'hardcore' dancer with her arms raised above her head. In Gemma's case the title for both band and single was 'Into Oblivion' - a familiar motif in rave/club culture (Redhead, 1993; McRobbie, 1994; Thornton, 1995). Gemma often worked at the same table as Sara and, to some extent, their approach appears similar. However, Gemma seemed to write more within the constraints of her position as a student and to have been less interested in reproducing the media forms available to others. Her review, for example, was presented more as a piece of school work than something to be read in a magazine: she did not offer a media format, location or author. Her writing is uneven in tone, veering

between an approximate use of journalistic idioms and a more formal, distanced, classroom discourse:

> Into Oblivion are a fab new band. They have just brought out a single. Its called into oblivion and its really good. This band will probably go a long way they will also go to number one.
> The young lady who sings is a very talented girl and she has a great voice, she's another Annie Lennox. She also has a great future ahead of her.

The uncertainty in her mode of address, compounded by the lack of an invented authorial stance, suggests her difficulty in moving outside the immediate educational setting and the teacher-student relationships within which her writing is conceived. By contrast with Cheryl, for example, the discursive resources to which she has access, at least as represented in her writing, seem to confine her largely to a school student identity. Her evaluation is similarly marked by a greater acceptance of the prescriptive authority of teachers:

> When we first *got given* this project and what to do, we *got given* a questionaire on music. *We had to ask* our friends different questions such as when they listen to music.....Then we were given some pictures...and *we had to choose* one...*we had to make* a cover and a name for a new bands album this was not easy...Then *we had to write* a review...This project was very interesting because music is something that most teenagers are interested in. I think my end result is quite good. [My italics]

This review, with some slight emphasis added by my editing, is largely devoted to representing herself as carrying out instructions given to her by her teachers; she appears dutiful, almost polite, and her evaluative comments relate to

her own efforts, not to the nature of the task. Somewhat at odds with most of her comments, she adds that it was 'very interesting' - as if it is a part of being a good student, and perhaps a good girl, to reassure the (male) teacher. And, at the same time, she confirms her willingness to be addressed as a 'teenager', again by contrast with others who claim a more adult identity.

Margaret

Margaret and Abby also did what they were told, or asked, to do. But their tactical negotiations of the task demonstrate a more middle-class array of cultural resources - resources of a kind probably less available to those other students discussed so far (cf. the 'aggressively hip' students in Frith, 1983). Margaret took the sole image of a man offered to the class and worked in a desultory, rather dissatisfied, way towards completion of each of the tasks they 'had to do'. I want to quote at some length from her critical evaluative essay:

> The first thing we had to do for this project was ask 15 to 20 year olds about their taste in music. We were given a questionaire and told to re-write it. I thought that there should have been a question referring to drugs as I know lots of young people take drugs to enhance music. For example, hardcore ravers take speed and ecstacy. People into indie drink a lot and take acid trips. All young sub-cultures smoke cannibas. Therefore a question relating to drugs was very relevant to this topic. Also the question about what people wear was also very relevant and I think deserved exploring. So I asked the interviewees if what they wore reflected the music they were into. I also asked if there was any kind of music which people found offensive.

> Quite a few people found Ragga and Heavy Metal offensive regarding their views on women. I also thought the questionnaire needed a question referring to whether people buy records, tapes or CDs.

This is her first substantial comment. It makes clear that she has a knowledge which she feels enables her to identify inadequacies in the range of questions presented by her teachers. Thus despite the often repeated reference to the compulsory demands made by the assignment, and her self-positioning as a somewhat long-suffering student, she moves to adopt a position of some authority, rivalling that of the teachers and enabling her to record a degree of agency in her subsequent development of the project. She is concerned to differentiate herself individually and to adopt a position as a somewhat distanced mediator between the cultures of youth and the quizzical ignorance of teachers; she does not, in writing, implicate herself in what she describes and her knowledge, given the conventions of educational discourse, is thus enhanced by its removal from the taint of immediate personal experience. She 'knows', better than most in this group, exactly how to produce the kind of writing that is valued - because it is taken as evidence of the emergent, autonomously critical and reflective subject. A striking example of this occurs somewhat later in her essay: "Before I did the review of the album for a magazine I skim [crossed out] researched a bit by looking through music publications...". The self-correction here indicates the

process of re-presenting her self in the written mode; the more rational, purposive and educated subject doesn't just skim even if that's what it looks like.

These are her comments on her choice of image:

> We were offered a fairly limited choice of images. They were all women except for one man. I noticed that everyone else was choosing women, so I chose the man to be different and also because it seemed a bit challenging. The man was white and middle aged. I think in the original picture he was meant to be a journalist or something because he has a bag slung across his shoulder. He had lots of people around him, but I cut him out and put clouds behind. I decided from the first time I saw him that he would be Spanish American rock musician so, with a little help from sir I came up with the name Pedro Escobar. I took a particulally long time to choose a title for the single because I wanted something really convincing to go with the image. I decided on "On my way" because the man is looking ahead in a way that suggests he has a destination to reach. [*See Figure 13: Pedro Escobar*]

Of course she very explicitly states her wish to differentiate herself individually here but, more substantially, she offers an account of her work which places her in a position of some power: she takes a 'challenging' image and transforms it, constructing meanings which were not immediately available in the 'raw' material. To work with a given image, rather than select her own, declares her skill in the practice of the particular discipline - Media Studies - and might thus be assessed as a more convincing demonstration of her understanding than those assignments in which an image from another source was substituted. So the

'individualism' she appears to claim could also be construed as a kind of conformity. At the same time, she works at the image, and the related tasks, with a degree of detachment; despite her strong interest in music and her earlier self-presentation as a knowledgeable participant in popular music culture, there is little attempt here to either represent the music she likes or to explore versions of sexuality - though choosing a man and rendering him 'exotic' (Pedro Escobar) could be seen as sustaining her 'hip' stance. Still, there is a greater separation between the regions of personal identity and that of public knowledge in Margaret's production of written work for assessment than in the work of the other girls. However, in talk, Margaret was somewhat more inclined to move back and forth across the boundary between 'personal' and 'scholastic' self-presentation and, indeed, was therefore seemingly less 'middle-class' than 'in' her writing. There is thus a degree of variability in the particular class attributions which can be made, dependent upon the type of material in question - Margaret appears in a variety of positions across a range of representational contexts.

Some of the other girls, and certainly the boys, were not so inclined to represent themselves either 'as' or 'in' writing. But though there is some indicative relationship between writing and a particular kind of class relation to education, it is inappropriate to use writing as if it could

be an especially reliable key to the 'true identity' of the students. As I suggested in Chapter 3, it is more plausible to see classroom writing as one among a number of representational forms in which, in different ways, students act to produce possible, not necessarily mutually consistent, positions - this writing should thus be considered, like talk, as a situationally specific event within a set of social and institutional relationships. As I have argued in earlier chapters, rather than read this material for 'testimonies of the self', I am concerned to interpret their writing in terms of tactical self-positioning in the context of its production.

Beyond the 'conformity' of Margaret's critical-evaluative discourse, there is also a more antagonistic tendency: the terms of the pretence which the assignment invited students to accept are more directly questioned. The assignment suggested an imaginary self-positioning in another domain, that of the music industry, and thus offered an invitation to play: let's pretend even though what is to be produced will be largely hand-written on lined paper in the school classroom. This pretence is in contradiction with the more powerful fact of positioning as a student - everyone knows this is just a game played in school. Further, the invitation to play is not welcome to those leaving childhood and seeking

to enter a more adult oriented phase of 'youth'. Margaret concluded her evaluation thus:

> With the facilities I had to use I think my CD cover was reasonably successful. It is the only piece of work I am really satisfied with. The poster was unsuccessful because it looks really unproffesional. I would have prefered it in colour, but we don't have a colour photocopier. The review of the album was fairly good, but too short. I couldn't think of much more to write and the reviews in magazines are always short, so I based it on them. The storyboard was my least successful part of the assignment because I found it really hard to draw the pictures well. Also the video wasn't very imaginative and would need more variation of scene in reality.
>
> This unit didn't exactly help me to find out more about music, just reinforced what I already knew. During this unit of work I have learnt just how difficult it is to design record sleeves and videos, before doing this work I thought it would just be easy, and fun. But although it was enjoyable it was also hard work. If I could change anything with my work I would make it more profesional looking.

The dissatisfaction here suggests that the whole assignment is 'only playing' and that, as such, it is not for young people who are no longer children. There are important issues to emphasise here: it suggests, yet again, the unsatisfactory way in which schooling sustains some aspects of adult-child relations beyond the age at which most children are happy to leave childhood; it points to the way in which schools, and subjects like English in particular, have long sustained too great a distance from the practices and sites of work and particularly work regarded as 'commercial' and 'industrial' rather than continuous with academic culture; and it also

implies the problematic subordination of practical production to tasks defined by the anachronistic imperatives of examinations (see Donald, 1992; Jones, 1989; 1995). In Margaret's wish to make what she produced a more fully realized example of a commercial genre she implies a desire to go beyond the context-tied value of school genres to achieve something which has a more pervasive presence and power throughout contemporary market culture. But in doing so, she is not refusing school and her position as a student as such; it is more credible to suggest that the critique implied is of the particular constraints, resources and social relations of schooling as it is presently constituted (see Richards, 1997).

Abby

There are some continuities here in looking at the last of the girls' assignments. Abby also aspires to achieve the authenticity of the commercial genres simulated in the assignment. She rejected the images offered to the class and chose her own set of images of dark haired young women (being a dark haired young woman herself); like Margaret, she was attracted by a Hispanic name - Guadalupe Lopez:

> My friend decided to do an unusual singer who was from Central America which gave me the idea to do a North American Hispanic singer.
> So I went through the magazines looking for a Hispanic model, I soon found the model I wanted and tried her picture out on the background. It looked good so I decided to use that picture.

As she progresses through her evaluation, there is a recurrent use of 'real' and 'realistic' to designate the degree of correspondence between her own artifacts (poster, review, CD cover) and the products they simulate. Reality is here constituted through attention to details of language, style, design and graphics:

> I then had to design a tour poster. I chose a picture of a woman who looked a lot like the model in the front cover, only she had short hair. I decided to make it more real by having a support act. I had to keep the design basic as when I've studied the magazines for ideas the ads are always small and plain. I put the poster in a design for a magazine and labled the words like they would be on a real tour ad. I then had to make a review for the artist. I looked at magazines and wrote in the style, putting my one sided view across as I felt I was actually supporting a real artist. I decided to make my own magazine review page and also reviewed some other real artists work on it. I used pictures of an actor as the DJ who reviews the page and a picture of Tom Jones to make it more realistic.

The 'reality-effect' is conferred by a genre which is not, like those particular to school, an artifice within which to acquire marks; by including names, pictures and references to 'real artists' Abby limits, but also compounds, the masquerade. The claim to inhabit non-school genres is a claim to a degree of power for her work but it is made just because her position, and the status of what she actually produces, is no more than material for assessment. For her work to really have a use-value beyond the relation of student to examination, a different set of relationships between schooling and the public domain of media artifacts would need

to be constituted (see Avis, in CCCS Education Group II, 1991). In a sense, she is up against the boundary of her identity as a school student and, given the still strong division of that identity from those with more of the power and responsibility of adulthood and with some productive agency, what she makes of the task is inescapably contradictory. The majority of what students do in school does not invite this play with forms of non-school production and it can be seen that in Media Studies, if not exclusively there, the practices involved do focus and register tensions in the experience of being schooled. Abby's CD cover was among the most meticulously attentive to detail, even including a computer bar-code and an array of carefully drawn logos. The allure of a West Coast corporate address - 1299 Ocean Avenue, Suite 800 Santa Monica, CA 90102 - is also suggestive of the wish to locate her text as originating precisely where she is not, beyond the immediate reality of a classroom in Hackney. Thus, though what she produces may attract a relatively high valuation by teachers, her texts are also marked by their non-school, media authenticity - they gesture towards a domain of textual production remote from the constraints of the school classroom.

Stephen and Alan

The very few boys who produced any kind of assignment at all were clearly similarly orientated towards this other scene of

production and, being less concerned to sustain student identities than most girls, actually produced remarkably little. There were almost as many boys in regular attendance at this class as there were girls; but only two 'completed' the music assignment and, in both cases, their work was less substantial and less elaborate than that of the girls. Stephen, who commented that the work was not worth doing - because it was classroom based and remote from 'actual' production - did produce a roughly sketched CD cover: a side view of an American football helmet with a large letter 'G' logo and captioned George and The PACKERS. The choice of such a helmet does call upon the imagery of a highly 'masculinized' sport and the name 'George' was given to an image of a young white woman selected from the initial set. Furthermore, a further image, its purpose unclear, was a carefully controlled computer graphic displaying the biological symbols for male and female touching - above, the name George, and below, 'A Challenge' [*See Figure 14: George - A Challenge*]. No explanatory notes and no evaluation accompanied these or the other items he presented. Despite his interest in black music, this material seems to represent aspects of music marketing more associated with the dance music of which, elsewhere, he was quite dismissive. However, within the school context, it seems likely that images originating in sport and in computer generation connect the

little work that he did do with quite strongly 'masculinized' features of the curriculum.

In some respects, Alan's work is similar: in this case a black model is also given an ambiguously male name 'Sunny D.' if more explicitly identified with a 'pop' repertoire. Alan's listing of songs is a plausible set of romantic 'pop' songs - 'Please', 'Belive Me', 'Live It Free', 'Come To Me', 'Call Home Sometime', 'Your Mine', 'I Need You, Now', 'Hearts can be broken'. Though an interest in lyrics which explore 'love and relationships' was acknowledged by Alan in an earlier interview, here the particular music genre is not one with which he otherwise appears especially concerned - except as 'covered' by Mick Hucknall/Simply Red. There is no cover sheet, no evaluation and no explanatory comment. The image of the black model is cropped in incorporating it into his CD cover - LIVE IT FREE! - and is used much as it was received for his album/concert poster - 'ALL I WANT IS? (CD, Tape, Vinyl)/ Live at Wembley' [*See Figure 15: Live at Wembley*]. Again, like Stephen, the products have been made, the task fulfilled, but there is a lack of detail in the replication of media forms and a kind of 'roughness' to their presentation, consistent with much of their other work. This could be indicative of a lazy indifference to school work in general, but, equally, it hints at their relation to the play-like nature of the tasks. To some extent, their work

suggests a lack of interest in the pretence involved in simulation. They decline to minimize or conceal the material character of a school based assignment and are thus, as boys at 16, unwilling either to be enthusiastic children or to pretend that their products are other than the outcome of work with scissors and glue, pencil and paper.

Alan's review was, at first, surprising in its presence and its quantity. Though written, and on lined school paper, it is more like a script to be spoken:

> The great New debut ALBUM FROM SUNNY DAVIES IS TOPPING THE ALBUM CHARTS ALL OVER THE WORLD AND HAS MADE HISTORY by Realeasing TWO Songs FROM, ALL I WANT IS, Reaching Number 1 WITH BOTH OF THEM AND AT THE SAME TIME THE GREAT ALBUM HAS STAYED AT NUMBER 1 FOR 7 WEEKS.
>
> The TWO Songs reached Number One IN, First JUNE 94 WITH 'LIVE IT FREE' AND STAYED IN THE CHARTS UNTIL MID JULY.
>
> THE NEXT SONG to REACH THE TOP SPOT WAS 'HEARTS CAN BE BROKEN' WHEN IT KNOCKED 'US 3 R 2' of the TOP IN AUGUST 3RD AND STAYED THERE UNTIL SEPTEMBER 28.
>
> THE FIRST SONG (LIVE IT FREE) ALSO REACHED NUMBER 1 IN 3 OTHER COUNTRIES.
>
> AND 'HEARTS CAN BE BROKEN' REACHED NUMBER 1 IN A MASSIVE 6 different COUNTRIES.
>
> SHE HAS JUST Realeased ANOTHER SONG FROM HER ALBUM CALLED 'COME TO ME' AND IS AT A HANDSOME POSIOTION IN THE CHARTS AT 22, WHO KNOWS maybe SUNNY WILL MAKE FURTHER HISTORY BY MAKING IT 3 NUMBER ONES ON THE TROT.
>
> HER ALBUM IS STILL SELLING WELL AND WE HAVE JUST BEEN INFORMED THAT SUNNY WILL BE APPEARING AT WEMBLEY ON THE 15 16 + 20th OF OCTOBER AND YOUR Faverite pop MAGAZINE will be giving away 3 pairs of TICKETS TO SEE SUNNY DAVIS only if you can answer THIS EASY Question.

"WHO WAS THE LAST PERSON/S TO Reach Number One IN boTH Album and singles CHARTS?
WAS IT = BRUCE + TRIGGER
ANNIE ARMITAGE
or WAS IT
Kenny Joansom.

If you THINK ITS YOUR lucky day just phone THIS HOTLINE 0898=7989.

Soming up SUNNY DAVIES ALBUM I would Deffinatly Recommend you buying this.

C-D. = £13.99p
L.P. = £9.99p
TAPE = £7.99p

Review Completed by DAVID CLARK.

It is difficult to adequately represent the shifts between 'upper' and 'lower case' writing here and, often, the formation of his script seems to hover indeterminately between the two [*But see Figure 16: Review of CD*]. To some extent there may be some correspondence between these shifts and the way that he conceives the speaking voice which, clearly, is intended to utter these words - 'we have just been informed'. In fact, the idioms he adopts suggest a high degree of familiarity with television and radio pop reviewing styles and a considerable awkwardness in attempting to represent these within the notional form of a magazine review crossed with a school genre. He wrote his full name at the top of the page, his form 5MT, and the date 10-2-93. His work is constrained by the customary privileging of written material in school; here, there is no reasonable basis for the writing demand and its effect is to impede the more

fluent assumption of the speaking voice he strives towards (see Kress, 1994). It is, again, a matter of the task positioning him as a school student rather than as a more adult student-producer located within the domain the assignment gestures towards. There is some basis therefore for suggesting that the task was probably experienced as consistent with the usual order of schooling, and its regulation of the forms of representation and subjectivity. For Alan, it was neither an opportunity for making very much of what he already knew nor for learning more of the variety of actual media practices.

Unlike several of the girls, the boys were relatively uninterested in taking up positions which might recognize some value in the exchange of effort now for an educationally formed identity later. Thus, even though the focus here was in the popular domain and even though the tasks were not, on the whole, strictly bounded by conventional school genres, the mode of engagement was conditional upon the 'investments' that students made in being particular kinds of people (see Avis, and Carspecken, in CCCS Education Group II, 1991). The class orientation of some of the girls (a combination of where they understand themselves to be placed and where they aspire to be) was formed and represented in common terms with many of the boys. However, for the boys, the persistence of some particular features of an older working-class

masculinity did seem to make it that much more of a compromise to appear as someone good at school-work (Willis, 1977; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). This male working-class habitus seemed tightly bounded and thus not easily contaminated with forms of presentation, implicitly of themselves, involving 'neatness', 'attention to detail', 'thoroughness' and 'efficiency' (cf. Kress, 1995: p.92). As I have noted, most of the boys did not present any work for assessment at all and their characteristic classroom presence was, in terms of what 'we-as-teachers' perceived as appropriate and worthwhile, distracted and disengaged.

There is more to this, however. Stephen's computer graphics and Alan's 'review' might also, if more tentatively, be read as evidence of some reconfiguring of working-class masculinities - they appear to appropriate, if as somewhat masculine, modes of representation associated with the media and computer technologies and previously regarded as 'feminine' (cf. Connell, 1994; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). As I suggested in Chapter 4, Stephen, in that instance taking a more 'traditional' male working-class position, pointed to the actual production context of music - the studio - as a worthwhile place to visit because there, rather than in the classroom, useful learning might take place. So, though the privileging of access to high technology is a familiar feature of masculine fantasies of power and control, it is

also an entirely justifiable challenge to the inadequacy and anachronism of a Media Studies constrained by a school classroom no more 'equipped' than it may have been thirty years ago. Access to computers, though by no means a guaranteed agent of magical transformation in the social relations of schooling, does nevertheless make possible some degree of repositioning as a student-producer in a more credible relation to the domains of adulthood and work (see Jones, 1995: p.239; Hatcher and Jones, 1996). Such access is consistent with the stress on taking up a more adult position, beyond the teacher-pupil/student relation, which for both the boys and the girls was a persistent concern.

Again, as I have argued elsewhere (Richards, 1997), I want to note that teachers who have a knowledge of a vocational practice and its associated technologies are often more likely to be regarded as 'legitimate authorities' by the working-class students - both boys and girls - discussed in this and the preceding chapters. Teachers, like myself, preoccupied with what students already know, and with access to forms of knowledge sometimes hard to represent as 'useful', are not likely to be perceived as anything more than 'just teachers' (cf. Carspecken, in CCCS Education Group II, 1991). An additional adult identity, perhaps a continuing history of involvement in another practice, might enable teachers to offer and sustain an experience of school as more

integrally connected to other socially and economically productive settings. In the context of this argument, there is also a need to question the very powerful authority of written forms and the assumption that the knowledge and reflection we aim to develop has to be relayed through such forms. Other practices - of a dominantly oral or visual kind, for example - need to be recognized and the identities they anchor given more than the status of marginal and transient curiosities. Whatever the difficulties in reconstituting the relation of 'adolescents', and teachers, to schooling, there is significant scope for development in forms of teaching which do not take the classroom, its routines, and its particular culture of literacy, as central.

Conclusion

The teaching strategy reported here, like the group evaluations examined in Chapter 4, was deliberately contained by the pattern of existing practice in GCSE Media Studies. The constraints which such an approach imposed - image work and minimal resources - were productive: their assignments provided valuable evidence of how the students negotiated, and sometimes ignored, the form of the demands made upon them. The reading I have offered, drawing initially upon Hodge and Kress (1988), has foregrounded the question of power in transactions between students and the formal demands of the curriculum.

In this school setting, the boys were particularly uncomfortable with the demands of writing and, by contrast with their involvement in the group evaluation discussed in Chapter 4, they showed little enthusiasm for such work (cf. Willis, 1977). The earlier oral discussion, between boys and with myself as a male teacher, had allowed a performance of masculinity which could be enjoyed and in which everyone could participate with some satisfaction. In writing, such opportunities for 'performance' seemed largely unavailable to them, and their interest in the images was, apparently, satisfied elsewhere. Indeed, the disappearance of the images from their folders was itself a matter of some amused mutual accusation - the images, destined for inclusion in their GCSE assignments, had been diverted, they alleged, to their various bedroom walls, thus, implicitly, relocated as objects of masturbatory rather than scholarly pleasure.[7] The masculine identities the boys were interested in sustaining were in an uneasy tension with the central need to write in order to complete the assignment. However, for a majority of the girls writing appeared to present an occasion for some confirmation of their skills as young women (cf. Kress, 1995: pp.92-3) and, though with widely varying degrees of fluency across modes of formality and informality, and with the partial exception of Claire, they did strive to complete the written components of the assignment. Certainly, for Margaret

and for Abby, writing was a resource which they could use to construct a more middle-class public 'persona' than, on the whole, they could achieve through talk - especially in contexts shared with their fellow students. Nevertheless, for girls in this mostly working-class group, even for Margaret and Abby, and more obviously for the others, their 'investment' in the power of such middle-class identities, through writing, was still somewhat equivocal. At 16, at the end of compulsory schooling, they had not, it seemed, settled how they might project their public identities beyond the 'threshold' of GCSEs and into the immediate future that lay beyond their completion of year 11.

My reading of the assignments in this chapter was first formulated about a year after I taught these students. But the emphasis of my reading shifted, and the chapter was thus somewhat rewritten, after extending my research into the selective school in Edmonton and the work of Media Studies students in year 12. In the next chapter I present, by contrast, examples of a more settled and more resolute investment in the construction of self-identity in writing, specifically through discussion of 'autobiographies' framed, initially, by the fantasy of participating in *Desert Island Discs*, or a programme very like it.

Notes

1. As I noted in Chapter 4, this initiative replicated work done with another class by a recently qualified English and Media Studies teacher.

2. This is a more accurate description of the teachers in Hackney, still very much involved with English, by contrast with those in Edmonton.

3. See Appendix 1. Alan's self anchorage in consumption (thirty-seven CDs) or Margaret's self encapsulation in music radio are cited in relation to Harvey's (1989) analysis of 'time-space compression'.

4. Another possibility, suggested to me by Joe Tobin (University of Hawaii), is that these images and her song titles might be read as 'pre-sexual' or, at least, located in infancy. It may be that there is here a fascination with looking and being looked at, suggestive of the 'mirror-stage', and thus the looking is less overtly sexual than ontological, seeking to contain anxieties on that level: What do I look like? Do you like looking at me? Do you see me as I see myself? Can I see myself in your looking at me?

5. 'Like Pony Boy and other Greek Cypriot students that we have known, Harry was attempting to disavow or at least renegotiate his own ethnicity, in this case through proclaiming musical taste.' (Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994: p.65)

6. For some detailed analyses of rap videos by women (MC Lyte, Salt 'N' Pepa) see Rose, 1994: Chapter 5.

7. Earlier, I had noted that 'the boys were keen to get the full sets to which they were entitled' (Classroom notes, 8.1.93).

Illustrations

IMAGES REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

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Chapter 6: Desert Island Discs

Introduction

The focus of this chapter, though reporting a different group of students from those discussed so far, is upon a further mode of engagement with students' experience of, and tastes in, popular music. The data examined here provides the basis for another answer to the question I posed in Chapter 3: How can media teachers engage with their students' past, and continuing, experience of popular music? To some extent, in what follows, I pursue the argument that taste is an expression of an individual's objective location in systems of social classification and difference, but I also try to show how 'mercurial' such expressions might be. This emphasis has been foreshadowed in previous chapters, of course, and clearly informs the analysis presented in Chapters 4 and 5. The main concern, however, is to focus upon the students' writing and to consider how productive, in the representation of popular cultural experience, the turn to another form of school based writing might be. In the research for this chapter, I explored an *autobiographically* orientated mode of writing with year 12 students in Edmonton.[1]

It was not until January 1995, two years after I carried out the taught unit with year 11 students in Hackney, that I initiated a new phase of work with a group of A Level Media

Studies students. In Hackney, the group evaluations (Chapter 4) were productive of tactical self-representations between peers in the context of a teacher-led discussion, and the written assignments (Chapter 5) had provided further data for my analysis of how the students positioned themselves simultaneously in the popular and school based discourses available to them. However, I wanted to try out other ways of engaging with students' experience of popular music and, particularly, to adopt an approach less constrained by the immediate pressures of assessment. I also wanted to work with students located in ways which would also enable them to 'try out' something *additional* to the strict requirements of their course. First year A level students seemed the most promising group to choose. Though it would have been interesting to return to the Hackney school with new plans for teaching, by 1995 they had reduced the number of Media Studies groups somewhat and Richard was no longer teaching Media Studies at all. Neither of the two remaining Media Studies teachers, though willing to discuss their work, were prepared to allow me access to their classes. In these circumstances, I turned to a very confident, and innovative, Media Studies department with a more specialized, and perhaps more flexible, approach to teaching the subject. Indeed, Media Studies in the Edmonton school had separated itself from the larger English department and was thus, in some respects, less marked by the

recent struggles over the curriculum evident in English departments elsewhere.

To extend my investigation into students' negotiations of the contradictory discursive orders of popular and school culture, I adopted a mode of enquiry which, again, involved the production of writing. In this case, the choice of an autobiographical form was also an 'experiment' in the teaching of Media Studies. Though autobiographical writing has been commonplace in English, to transpose it to Media Studies was an innovation in its practice. In Media Studies, there is a strong emphasis on conceptual knowledge, informing both textual and institutional analysis (see, for example, Alvarado, Gutch and Wollen, 1987). Even in the context of audience analysis, auto/biographical enquiries have had very little place and, by media teachers, might well be regarded as unduly 'personal' and thus somewhat beyond the proper concerns of the subject.[2] With this in mind, I felt that I had to locate my invitation to write autobiographically in a way which at least suggested some connection with 'media simulation'. Furthermore, to call upon them to draw on music, as a symbolic resource, in their autobiographical self-accounts required some plausible model of self-representation. The BBC Radio 4 programme, *Desert Island Discs*, provided a starting point.

Some preliminary attempts to determine a viable approach to 'music biographies' were made in the context of a Media Research Seminar involving myself and a number of teachers of Media Studies in secondary, further and higher education. The form in which members of the seminar were asked to report on their musical tastes replicated the flattery, and the fantasy, of being invited to select favoured records to play on *Desert Island Discs*. Though I don't intend to comment on the self-reports offered in the seminar, at least not in any detail, the session was interestingly unnerving, personally revealing and, to some extent, uncomfortable. Thus, even among consenting adults of similar educational background, and mostly already quite well known to each other, self-presentation through musical tastes was perceived to be more risky than a discussion in which selections of books, films, television programmes and even clothes might be the main concern. Indeed, if I look back to the introduction to this thesis, and my own autobiographical disclosure of musical tastes, I'm aware of how careful I've been, eliminating reference to all sorts of things I once owned but subsequently had to expel, along with unwanted identities.[3]

These biographical games suggested several possibilities. Taste in music appears to be constructed as revealing of 'interiority' - because music is culturally positioned as a distinctively 'expressive' and 'affective' medium (see

Middleton, 1990; Shepherd, 1991; McClary, 1991; Green, 1997). Moreover, there is a broad, though culturally circumscribed, reading of the 'physical' characteristics of music as mysterious: a medium which, because it cannot be seen, can be felt but not touched, and which may be experienced as both filling the external space around us and penetrating the boundaries of the body as well, might thus be equated with religious concepts of spirituality and of inter-subjective communion (cf. McClary, 1991: pp.23-26). The histories of both European 'classical' and of African-American music are significantly entwined with traditions of religious assembly and of the various configurations of inter-subjectivity which they have aspired to achieve. For example, Jazzie B's 'Soul-II-Soul', though seemingly an entirely secular concept, nevertheless implicitly recovers the religious connotations of soul music.[4] Of course, the religious modalities of inter-subjectivity inscribed in soul performance are always also constantly reappropriated as metaphors of sexual experience. This is perhaps further confirmation of the way in which translation between the domains of religious, sexual and musical experience is characterised by some convergence around concepts of disconnection from the everyday and a dissolution of the enclosing boundaries of the subject (see Bourdieu, 1986: pp.79-80).

In this context taste, as well as being a matter of locating the self in a social classification, can also be understood as an element in a more fluid discursive construction of relations between subjects. Thus, subjects may position themselves in relations with others through a mapping of such relations onto the allegiances and divisions available in discursively constructed taste categories: friends might, for example, register 'friendship' through a common liking for rap and not pop. Equally, the negotiation of boundaries may be, in fantasy, strictly around a singular self, or may locate the self with numerous others (fans, perhaps) or, of course, may be dyadic - in the 'sharing of tastes', as a signifier of intimacy. Such boundaries can also be exclusions, sometimes vigorously insisted upon - by people for whom the inter-subjective taste relation is more sharply defined by refusing to include others.

Bourdieu: on 'taste' and 'youth'

In *Distinction* (1986) Bourdieu's methodology, mainly large scale social surveys and 'questionnaires', provides the means for mapping relations between cultural choices, objective social positions, and the distances between classes and class fractions within a national culture.[5] The statistical production of such a map has a provisional validity - it allows plausible hypotheses about relations between culture and class on a macro-sociological scale. However, it does not

adequately suggest how social subjects, complexly formed through many more social categories than class, continue to reform themselves in more fluid and variable sets of relations with others.

However, Bourdieu does address the issue of agency, though necessarily qualifying what it might mean:

> Without subscribing to the interactionist - and typically petit-bourgeois - idealism which conceives the social world as will and representation, it would nevertheless be absurd to exclude from social reality the representation which agents form of that reality. The reality of the social world is in fact partly determined by the struggles between agents over the representation of their position in the social world and, consequently, of that world. (Bourdieu, 1986: p.253).

With this in mind, it is useful to turn to what Bourdieu has to say about youth:

> The 'young' can accept the definition that their elders offer them, take advantage of the temporary license they are allowed in many societies ('Youth must have its fling'), do what is assigned to them, revel in the 'specific virtues' of youth, **virtu**, virility, enthusiasm, and get on with their own business - knight-errantry for the scions of the mediaeval aristocracy, love and violence for the youth of Renaissance Florence, and every form of regulated, ludic wildness (sport, rock etc.) for contemporary adolescents - in short, allow themselves to be kept in the state of 'youth', that is, irresponsibility, enjoying the freedom of irresponsible behaviour in return for renouncing responsibility. (Bourdieu, 1986: pp. 477-8).

In some respects this corresponds to the argument which I proposed in Chapter 2 - that 'youth' and 'adolescence' are institutionally powerful categories to which young people are

subject but which they also draw upon in contesting the social relations, particularly of schools, in which they are positioned. However, Bourdieu's reference to 'struggles between agents over the representation of their position' should also qualify his suggestion that the young 'allow themselves to be kept in the state of "youth"'. For though this is one plausible reading of the social position 'accepted' by young people, many other meanings and consequences of 'irresponsibility' need to be considered. Otherwise, there is a risk of acquiescing in Bourdieu's tendency to imply an historically enduring deception in which the differing possibilities of 'youth' are blurred together. To the contrary, I want to emphasise that if tastes in youth are less constrained to fit into the prevailing order of (good) taste, then they can be less conforming to cultural boundaries, both those of 'official' culture and of popular culture. They might be more promiscuous, more (dis)located and more unpredictable than Bourdieu appears to accept (see Bourdieu, 1986: pp.466-7). 'Youthful irresponsibility', however much a deferral of social power and responsible adult agency, can be productive of significant cultural innovation and not least through the mixing of perhaps otherwise dissociated cultural elements which, confined to the young, are thus brought into relation with each other. For example, schools, because they bring together disparate groups on the basis of their youth, provide one kind of context for such

mixing (cf. Hewitt, 1986: p.154). Thus while reconfirming the subordination of the young, they also contribute to the preconditions of cultural (re) combination.

The limitations of Bourdieu's descriptions, particularly when faced with historical specificity and change, with expanding cultural diversity and with questions of political action and ethical choice, have been noted by many critics.[6] Despite this, the account developed in the rest of this chapter continues to engage with his approach to the logic of taste. Moreover, Bourdieu's (1992) essays on language (cited in Chapter 2) do suggest a more flexible approach at least to the tactical anticipation of value in exchanges between participants situated in particular social fields. My emphasis, in what follows, is thus upon the specific institutional encounters in which 'tastes' are declared, and upon the variety of purposes such 'declarations' might fulfil, for students situated as successful participants in an academic Sixth Form.

Autobiographies

The following discussion centres on the way in which twenty-two year 12 students represented themselves in response to a request which I recorded, for myself, in the following terms:

> I would like everyone to work out a way of selecting six track titles which might be used to represent yourself - using music to structure a condensed autobiography - to other people. It is up to you to decide on the kind of audience you want

> to address and what the context might be; equally, the context might well suggest a particular persona. You could, for example, imagine a scenario in which you have been invited onto a radio programme to talk about yourself and the music that you like. So, in whatever terms you choose, you need to suggest why your tracks matter to you, when they did so, and what you can say about them now.

I had prepared this in advance of my meeting with the students but I neither read it to them in this form, nor gave it to them on paper. As it happened they were together with one teacher,[7] watching a lengthy compilation of pop videos, in preparation for subsequent work on the recording industry. I simply took the opportunity to speak to them when their attention seemed to waver and it was thus appropriate to break from continuous viewing. I spoke to them briefly, elaborating on the text I had prepared. Certainly my identity as an Institute of Education lecturer interested in research was more distinctly defined for them than it was for the students at the Hackney comprehensive. To some extent, their response to the task might be judged as informed by a degree of respectful acquiescence and relative familiarity with the manner, and interests, of academics. These students, all studying for A levels in a selective school, were themselves mostly organizing their present in terms of a future in, and beyond, study at university level. Nevertheless, I did not offer any extended explanation of my motives other than noting that I was interested in questions of taste. I did suggest that, if they wished, they should bring along taped

compilations of their chosen tracks to accompany their written response. Two weeks later, when I returned for a discussion with them, and to collect their writing, several did offer tapes and one or two played selections and talked around them.

By contrast with the assignments discussed in Chapter 5, the written material produced in this context, though closely related to a current A Level Media Studies topic, was not obviously 'to be assessed'. To some extent, this made their writing a little less constrained by the need to produce the appropriate, 'conventional', forms. Whereas the Hackney students' writing mostly corresponded to a familiar, and subject specific, form of organization, my initial impression of these 'autobiographies' was of some generic uncertainty. I had suggested that they might frame what they wrote in the terms of a publicly broadcast form where their lives, and their interests in music, might be of central interest. I had also mentioned that, if they wished, they could write as someone other than themselves and thus adopt a temporary media persona. In fact, in their responses, they seemingly wrote 'as themselves' though, as will become apparent, the degree of 'personal' differentiation which that implies must be judged against the common repertoires of self-representation upon which they drew.

Virtually everyone present gave me what they had written (22 pieces of work). What remained unsaid was whether they should expect to see it returned to them and, if so, for what further purpose. The teacher responsible for the A Level course seemed to speak as if their writing was 'for me', to be given without any expectation that it be returned. This tended to locate what they had done as, at this stage, more of a response to a research enquiry than a necessary piece of course-work. It may be that the formality of presentation appropriate for assessed work was thus, implicitly, suspended. But to have expected their cooperation on this basis also enabled me to reflect further upon both my own assumptions about the GCSE students in Hackney and my interpretation of their responses to the 'tasks' in which I involved them. The Hackney students were less inclined to work to satisfy the needs of academic research, or, to any significant extent, for a teacher who was not *their* teacher.[8]

However, I and the media teachers addressed these A Level students as willing and capable, and as familiar both with forms of writing about themselves and with being requested to produce them for teachers. It is likely that my presence and my requests were accepted because of such pre-existing expectations, shared by students and teachers alike. In effect, I assumed both the outcome of their particular experience of schooling and their complicity in the

continuation of its demands even beyond the limit of compulsory attendance. Indeed, to write about themselves, in some detail, must have seemed quite 'natural' for students accustomed to believing their words, and their thoughts, to be of value. To be asked to provide writing for research, beyond the requirements of teachers, perhaps seemed further confirmation of what they 'knew' about themselves. Despite this, there were also a few students whose writing subsequently suggested some ambivalence and I will discuss these examples in the course of this chapter.

A further significant contrast between the classroom relationships evident in Hackney and those which appeared to prevail in Edmonton also emerged in the discussions surrounding the completion of their writing. Both the A Level Media Studies teachers also volunteered to represent their own life-histories in terms of their involvement in popular music and to do so in addressing the assembled group of between twenty-five and thirty students. There was far more security for these teachers in relocating themselves 'in adolescence', and in representing both past and present 'tastes' in music, than was possible in Hackney. There, for teachers to reveal aspects of themselves construed as 'personal' would risk some mockery, animated by a class coded antagonism. As Alison, the Hackney teacher quoted in the preceding chapter, recalled, displaying her own 'tastes' in

music had allowed some unwelcome ridicule; in such a predominantly working-class school, class differences between students and teachers must inevitably divide any attempt to construct a common experience of youth. In Edmonton, the teachers appeared more at ease, as if addressing younger versions of themselves, safe within the assumption of shared continuities between school identities and future adult positions. Indeed, I had been slightly apologetic in requesting autobiographical writing, and had suggested a fictional persona as one way of deflecting anticipated challenges to the intrusive aspect of the request. But there was very little overt resistance to such autobiographical display, despite the fact that I was a stranger to them.

Autobiography, as a classroom genre, is typically introduced by teachers as a means to recover early childhood experience and clearly also entails the prescription of subject positions distinct from, because enabling reflection upon, those located 'in childhood' (see James, 1993). These students were very much accustomed to being positioned, by teachers, as mature, distanced and reflective (cf. Moss, 1989). In fact, they were all likely to be very competent in this particular social practice of remembering and to have access to a variety of discursive forms in judging how to represent themselves on this particular occasion (see Middleton and Edwards, 1990).

Here, I suspect that I had invited a piece of writing with far more popular precedents than *Desert Island Discs*. In the wider cultural organization of long term memory, popular music radio constantly 'orders' the past through the recovery of 'chart music' differentiating seasons and years and decades. Alongside such practices as photography, particularly in combination with holidays, music has been constructed as one of the primary means of recovering 'memories', of 'liminal moments' and particularly their associated 'emotions'. It may be that the construction of self-continuity, in the context of 'time-space compression' (see Harvey, 1989; and Appendix 1), draws upon the resources provided by commercial popular music.[9] The task thus invited them to use a cultural resource with which, in these more general terms, all would be familiar. This may well be a further explanation for what was, on the whole, a relative subordination of school orientated features in their writing. The discursive forms on which they drew in producing their notionally self-representational texts appeared mostly to derive from a popular rather than a 'scholastic' repertoire.

On the particular occasion when I requested their writing, the group was composed of white students only, of whom perhaps two or three were Jewish. By comparison with the Hackney class, they were a much more middle class and

culturally homogeneous group. Furthermore, the past trajectories of these students were strongly convergent. At the age of 11, they had been selected from a large number of applicants by competitive examination and were therefore likely to be characterised by a significant commitment to educational achievement. The school has also favoured those students who are accomplished in the performance of 'classical' music and many were, in those terms, musically 'literate'.

In their writing, the range of musical references and the modes of self-representation suggest, to some extent, shared repertoires. Indeed, there is some evidence of 'tastes', in Bourdieu's sense, which might be connected with their class and educational locations. However, it is important also to read these pieces of writing as self-representational in their forms of organization, rather than simply in terms of explicit evidence of musical preferences. Taste, as a feature of social position, does not disappear from my analysis but it is clearly more than an 'objectifiable' quality of subjects and is more appropriately examined as a trope in the contextually variable discursive construction of the self.

As in the preceding chapter, I want to examine the writing in some detail, with attention to its modes of presentation (see Kress, 1993) and to the educational context of its

production. I have selected several cases, from both boys and girls, to discuss in terms of individual negotiation of the 'task'. I have not, therefore, been able to discuss all of the writing these students produced but I have sought to include a range of examples illustrative of the types of writing returned by the class as a whole.

David

In response to a brief 'questionnaire', scantily completed, David, a Jewish boy, not yet 17, responded to 'What do you expect to do when you leave (school)?' with 'Go to the shop + buy a coke! Ho Ho Media Studies at a University' [spelling corrected]. The elaboration of his self-account extended to five A4 pages (lined, with a margin) of small hand-written reflection. It was presented with the title Fish, his name, and signed and dated.

There are numerous spelling mistakes, words are crossed out and the hand-writing is sometimes awkward, occasionally difficult to read. The *formality* of presentation expected of 'school-work' was not, it seemed, a significant priority. The narrative exceeds and defies the constraint contained within the invitation (six tracks), naming whole albums and entire genres and only reluctantly settling for less. He talked confidently to the whole group about his selection and played the cassette that accompanied the writing. Clearly, the

organization of his self-account can be read as an accomplished act of synthesis between the forms of school writing and those of more informal practices. The ordered, linear narrative, appropriately paragraphed, demonstrates the competence of a student whose continuing formation is achieved, sustained and confirmed in the production of essays. But the title defies school conventions, transitions are more representative of informal speech genres ('Lets jump a bit now...'; 'Another Leap forward now...') and, quite often, he produces lists of artists, as if detailing the extent of his collection and finding satisfaction in presenting more publicly a mostly private writing practice. Indeed, his private investment, a sustained gathering of music into himself, animated his display of informal knowledge, overwhelming the sanctioned generic artifice of selecting six tracks. It seemed as if the urgency of self-presentation as an expert exceeded any more disciplined self-positioning as strictly competent within the given terms of the task.

His writing combines introspection with an assertive attention to detail. He draws upon a discourse in which early childhood experience is equated with the fundamentally formative moments of individual subjectivity. He begins 'From very young...', and positions music as 'integrale' (sic), 'key', able to 'stick in my mind'. He claims 'My mother tells

me I was able to clap to the rythm of records from about 6 months and I suppose that from then the influence realy was important' and, reiterating, continues 'From very young I remember certain tracks specificly...'. His account, thus framed, becomes a display of interiority and of competence in its recovery and analysis:

> By the next couple of years my tastes had turned to PUNK ROCK, The Stranglers. My parents had one of their albums and I was in love with the song, 'Golden Brown'. Again just realy because of repetitive play and familiarity with the track. At the time when I heared the record it conjured up an Image of a long, tiled passage, curving. This must have been a passage at a tube station in my mind's eye probably because at the end of the track there was a kind of echoy effect which must have played on my mind.
>
> Perhaps this is cheating but for my third choice I am choosing all three Hit Factory albums the best from PWL, Stock Aitken + Waterman. I cringe at the thought now but at the time I was so proud to be like part of this whole thing. I by purchasing this record, was part of the Hit Factory!

Such 'confessional' and 'personal' statement has a tactical value here: it is a condition of his claim to expert knowledge that such self-positioning be given depth and honesty and a history. The capacity to remember in detail, and to articulate such memory, also provides further confirmation of his scholastic credibility for, however 'trivial' and ephemeral the recollected 'tastes' might be, it is in his display of reflective self-distancing from them that his authority is constructed. Indeed, it is also likely that, in this highly competitive educational setting, he was

willing to 'reveal' so much because, in doing so, he positioned himself as that much more 'knowing' than his fellow students.

A further tactic involved in sustaining his 'position of knowledge' involved what, within the limited scope of my data, appeared to be a distinctly 'masculine' relation to music. For example, he writes 'As a Jew I had had my Bar Mitzvah and therefore gained a pretty lucrative sum of money. I spent nearly all over the next 2 years on cassette singles...I massed 119 cassette singles which I do pride myself on their diversity and variation...'. As I noted in Chapter 4, there is some evidence (though insufficient within the scope of my own research) that it is boys who collect music and appear to enjoy opportunities to make public the quantity, and sometimes the range, of what they have accumulated. To have a collection may be a way of marking out a public, and individually differentiated, self in the context of family and friendship networks. It is also, plausibly, a support for a particular practice of remembering, strongly accented as 'individual' by contrast with, for example, the practice of keeping a family photograph album (cf. Radley, in Middleton and Edwards, 1990; Harvey, 1989). Thus, though there are many ways in which a collection connects the collector to more broadly shared social identities, for boys this practice may signify a

tactical separation from familial others, and thus have some importance in claiming a particular kind of masculine identity (see Chodorow, 1978; Straw, 1997).

David also asserted that:

> I realy don't have any records that have Emotional connotations for me and the reason I buy a record is because of the sound and the quality not just because everyone else likes it or its a particular genre.

Again, this reaffirms his self-construction as an 'expert' and it is possible to suggest that in relation to music, which is culturally constructed as 'emotional', it was important for him, in this educational context, to define knowledge in terms which emphasise the achievement of rational discrimination, choice and control. In some circumstances, it may be more imperative for boys to position themselves within the terms of such a knowledge because they thus locate themselves as less vulnerable to the implication that they may be positioned by others. In a school where the achievement of 'knowledge' has been highly regarded, and striven for, not to espouse mastery in elite forms of knowledge could be problematic for both boys and girls. Within Media Studies, where an overtly theoretical discourse can reassure those devoting their time to the study of popular forms, pop music is an awkward object, untheorized and immediately a part of current everyday life. Distancing,

by invoking 'memory' for example, might thus become of some importance. For David, where distance is not claimed, the music is of a kind usually construed as hyper-masculine and, in his account, is given a selective political credibility:

> Now I have one choice left. The only area I haven't touched is rap. I now consume more rap than anything else perhaps because of its alternativeness, its legendry qualities or perhaps the rebelios attitude that prevails. My diversity in this area is apparent too with like for Old-Skool (sic) so called Gangsta rap, Jazz rap, G-Funk, and newly created Horror rap. My final choice though is from none of these. It is British, anti-racism anti-homophobia anti-sexism yet still with a sharp rhyme and a unique quality leading to contraversy in the music press. The record's Call it What You Want by Credit to the Nation.

Once again, this achieves several purposes. It sustains his self-representation as mobile across taste boundaries, itself a feature of the 'indeterminacy' of 'adolescence', and confirms that he knows such hard, male music. However, it also displays an explicit act of choice which, in the same moment, reasserts a politics appropriate to his positioning as a serious student in a liberal educational domain. In his concluding comment, he explains that for several years:

> I had no TV therefore was an avid listener to radio and listened to music no one else had heard of. When It comes to music I like to think I know what I'm talking about and this has been the case since my early teens. It is and I hope it continues to be an integrale part of my life.

In effect, he represents his own relation to music as both 'personal' and 'expert'. The account, from early childhood through to his self-positioning within a continuing

'adolescence', translates the layering together of several distinctive phases of his experience into an implicit guarantee of the cultural authority to which he lays claim (cf. Ross, 1989: pp.81-2).

Caleb

Caleb's 'Media Studies. Most memorable music tracks', by its title, locates what follows as belonging both in the domain of popular discourse and in the subject Media Studies. Memory and acts of remembering are of considerable importance here. In this case, the narrative is not that of the self as expert, but as emergent 'adolescent'. Like David, he presented much of his written account of himself to the whole group and was perhaps even more confident in doing so. There is also a similar tactical self-construction as the more mature, reflective self able to recall and retell emotionally accented events from an earlier period, almost as if the adolescent figure thus reconstructed was really a fiction. In fact, it would be plausible to suppose that these 'memories' are not Caleb's at all but are rather contrived in accord with the columns of teenage magazines. His act of public self-positioning combined humour and self-mockery with an implicit emotional authenticity. The text became both a script for a performance and, carefully word-processed, copy ready for publication:

> When I was in junior school, I had mixed feelings about the school Christmas parties or discos. I

> would look forward to it because, there would always be that chance of dancing (or not!) with that girl I was madly and passionately in love with. However, there was the fact that my clothes were not the height of fashion, but worse then that was that I never knew the words of the songs...The song I remember the most from these discos was **Michael Jackson's 'Beat it.'** All the boys knew the words, the girls only seemed to like those boys that knew the words, and hey, I didn't. All except for 'So beat it, beat it, beat it, beat it.' I remember lots of times when my worst nightmare would seem to come true. After plucking up the courage to ask my favourite girl to dance, the song would come on, and not wishing to be humiliated I would pretend I needed the loo, and run and disappear there. However, trying to keep my street cred, I would come back out again at the chorus singing 'Beat it, Beat it,' as if I knew the song like the back of my hand. Realising, I couldn't go to the toilets again, I would last the remainder of the dance by either turning around a lot, or covering my mouth whilst in a coughing fit (naturally singing the words as well!)

The rest of his account is constituted through a similar 'remembering' of particular songs in 'typical situations' with parents, friends and girls. Writing as a school student, sexuality is simultaneously claimed and disowned: an attribute of a self distanced by memory. In common with the talk of some radio djs, music is represented as giving access to that self and the emotions otherwise forgotten:

> Overall the majority of the songs, seem to indicate the desire for a romance with a girl when I was younger. Most of the songs have some reflection on the feelings I used to have towards different girls. Music on the whole does invite feelings of love and similar emotions to surface. However the songs that really mean the most to me are songs that remind me of a friend or a friendship, or some important time in my childhood.

Despite the tactical temporal distancing apparent here, it is worth recalling by contrast, how impatient with being positioned as 'adolescents' the boys, and some of the girls, in Hackney appeared to be. Caleb's appropriation of a discourse of 'adolescent emotionality', though carefully contained by the framing of a male self, suggests a continuing self-location somewhat within 'adolescence'. By comparison, the boys in Hackney, bored by their classroom bound predicament, and facing more immediate 'adult' futures, would have little coherent basis for representing themselves in this way; to do so would probably be construed as both childish and effeminate.

When I began this phase of my research, I expected that some quite clear connections between the choices of music students offered, features of their social position and other aspects of their publicly displayed identities would emerge. In fact, it was difficult to conceive of mapping relationships between forms of music and social identities in any very 'reliable' way.[10] Through comparisons with the Hackney group, it is possible to note some patterns of preference, constituted by class, gender and ethnic position: for example, ragga and hardcore were not, apparently, a significant part of the Edmonton students' repertoire. Such patterns are important. But, as the discussion of taste with the Hackney boys suggested, preferences could be very

unstable and publicly declared preferences changed, tactically, with the circumstances. For some - such as Stephen in Hackney or David in Edmonton - distinct claims to musical knowledge were of some importance but, for many others, preferences were represented as more contingent and to attach much significance to particular choices would be unproductive. Again, then, the question of taste is better defined in terms of how these students represent their *relation to* music: 'contingency' might thus be understood as one particular kind of 'taste-relation', a matter of particular cultural practices of self-presentation - if, also, sometimes an instance of individual disavowal.

Unlike either Stephen or David, Caleb did not make his choice of music a tactical claim to authority in the domain of popular music. His list was brief, eclectic but broadly popular: **'Beat It**, **Living Doll** and **The Young Ones** (Cliff Richard), **Tears of Heaven** (Eric Clapton), **Die Zauberflote** (Mozart), **End of the Road** (Boyz II Men), **I've Had the Time of my Life** (from **Dirty Dancing**), **Lady in Red** (Chris be Burgh) and **Love Shack'**. Of course, it would be possible to note what is not included here and to remark on its proximity to such 'bland' categories as 'easy listening' or 'MOR' but, in the end, explanation would have to return to the details of the circumstances which have been recalled in Caleb's selection and representation of these tracks.

It is important to note at this point, that for both David and Caleb and many of those students discussed subsequently, biographical organization of their writing does not produce a sharply delimited 'progression' from one music to another. There is often, if not always, an unwillingness to allow one music to entirely displace another. As I have suggested, to make equations between their choices and their 'identities', on the basis of such evidence, would be very difficult. Identities tended to be represented by many of these students as insistently undecided. However, it is also the case that the nature of the connections between musical choices and identities are not available within the conscious repertoires of discourse they deploy.[11] This remains an important area for further research, but it is clearly both well beyond the focus of this study and would need to draw upon kinds of data which it would be best not to seek through a relation between teacher and student.

However, some further, tentative, comment on the status of the students' choices can be offered at this point. For example, Hewitt (1992) has argued that to visualize 'identity' in a 'polyculture' it may be helpful to draw upon a comparison between urban graffiti and palaeolithic 'cave paintings'. In each case, he argues, images are superimposed within the same physical space and thus coexist in relations

of cumulative 'destabilization'. I want to suggest that, to some extent, though chronologically ordered, the effect of these 'adolescent' students' statements of musical interest is to accumulate layers of cultural identification without there being a 'core' identity beneath any one of them. It seems unhelpful, therefore, to select one layer and declare it to be unequivocally more fundamental than the others. To some extent this argument converges to confirm, though not from a psychoanalytic perspective, the case made in Chapter 2 (see Cohen, 1986; 1997) against the notion of simple 'transitions': the idea of singular, and clearly separated, stages is inadequate to the description of identities.

Nicholas

So far, I have discussed the writing produced by two boys and, of course, it is tempting to make generalizations about the gendering of the positions they adopt. To complicate this somewhat, I want to continue with further examples from the boys' writing before turning my attention to a selection of the girls' responses. '6 Tracks', by Nicholas, presents an account of his musical preferences which oscillates between choices seemingly located in an autonomous self, choices located in his family history and choices which are defined more by an occasion shared with friends. He produced a detailed and carefully hand-written account, adhering, even more closely than Caleb, to the prescribed instruction. The

complexity of his response to the task is thus, remarkably, contained and ordered within three sides of A4. All six of his choices are represented in terms which draw upon a repertoire of distinctive 'emotions' and, often, typically liminal experiences. Sometimes, it seems as if the encounter with a new and intensely 'emotive' music is itself a liminal moment:

> (i) 'Back to One' recorded by Obituary taken from the album 'The End Complete' recorded in 1992 for Roadrunner...It really opened up my mind to a new form of music. At first I was shocked because I had never heard any music like this ('Death' metal) and it was such a departure from the music I'd heard before, it was much more brutal and extreme. Because of this album I went on to buy and become interested in more extreme forms of music and this has basically shaped my musical tastes of today and the other bands I used to listen to no longer interest me except maybe holding memories of when I was younger.

His interest in 'death metal', and related forms, is further illustrated with '"Anaesthesia" Bass solo from the Album "Kill Em All" recorded by Metallicas Bassist Cliff Burton...'; and '"World of Shit" Nailbomb from the album "Point Blank" released on Roadrunner records 1994', on which he comments:

> This song as well as appealing to me musically being a hybrid cross between punk and death metal also appeals to me lyrically. Nailbombs lyrics are very social and political...Also is a very violent + aggressive song + is a good song to listen to when youre angry, it has an almost cathartic effect on me a good way of neutralising my anger.

This particular characterization of music as intensely affective will emerge as common to many of these students in discussion of subsequent examples. But here it is notable that the violence and apparent nihilism of the music is, on the whole, subordinated to a rationalist political discourse; thus 'World of Shit' is:

> ...about the violence racism hate etc which is 'bred' in the world by many of the worlds politicians + statesmen and how the earth as well as us is suffering consequences and how the solution lies with us as does the future. I prefer lyrics to be meaningful and to have a point + that is why this song appeals to me

Like David, Nicholas achieves a mix of interests here. The aggressive masculinity of metal is celebrated but also, in school, assimilated to a discourse in which such music is both 'cathartic' and politically 'educational'. This might suggest a quasi-heroic self-construction, locating himself in an implicit narrative of discovery, trauma and subsequent development. Through the extremity of the metal domain, he has become a more mature and politically sophisticated person. At the same time, such a narrative doubles as an account of learning and, consistent with the explanatory mode of address, reconfirms both his present, and his future, as a student for whom 'adolescent' experience has been explored and explained.

A further aspect of the construction of 'adolescent' experience, in this case as an almost uniquely memorable

biographical moment, is evident in many students' accounts of their summers, out of school.[12] Here, remembering, as one practice through which to sustain identity, clearly draws upon a broadly shared discursive repertoire though there is also a distinctive individual inflection, an accenting of both remembered 'contents' and of their retelling. In this case, Nicholas again, the evaluative emphasis on one track sustains the 'rational' subject position, reviewing experience and selecting from it to allow an aspect to stand as a public statement of taste:

> 'Fool to Cry' by the Rolling Stones originally recorded 1973 but rereleased on Jump Back...This song is another song I particularly like partially because of the memory and also because I think its a great song. The memory is of the first day of the Summer holidays after me and my friends finished our GCSEs. Met some of my old friends from primary school and some of my friends from this school all got together round one of my friends houses and decided to recreate Woodstock the festival in his bedroom seeing as we obviously didn't make it to the first one and it was summer of 35th [sic] anniversary. We just sat around listening to bands we would have liked to see play. (Rolling Stones, Doors, Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix etc.) It was a really nice sunny day and was a very 'mellow' experience. This song now always reminds me of that day and indeed the whole summer which was probably the best summer of my life. The song is possibly the best song I have ever heard memory aside.

A similar tactic is apparent in Nicholas' two remaining choices. Thus his account of 'Morricones "Good Bad + Ugly" [Ecstacy of Gold] taken from the soundtrack to the film' becomes a careful consideration of what part memory has played in forming a taste for such an apparently anomalous

choice. The track is defined as enabling the recovery of an intense, 'atmospheric and epic', experience which has, like his own 'Woodstock', a distinct location in a liminal time: 'me and some friends went to see Metallica play at the Milton Keynes bowl. Before Metallica come on they always play this music...one of the highlights of 1993'. Similarly 'Feed the World'/'Do They Know It's Christmas?' (Band Aid), which has no musical connection with his other choices, is explained in terms of a distinctive biographical moment:

> At this time my mother was in hospital about to have my youngest sister Jessica. On the night Jessica was born me and my other two sisters spent the night at friends houses while my Dad went to see my sister. The next morning as we drove to the hospital to see our new sister we were listening to the radio...it reminds me of that day even now and I always associate it with my youngest sister.

'Taste' in this account is produced as the outcome of a particular practice of remembering, widely shared and culturally popular as I have suggested, but also inflected towards the inscription of a distinct, reflective, individual self, assessing what combinations of coincident circumstances have motivated the given selection. The rhetorical tactics of the account as a whole are to construct, not a 'kind' of person, but himself as an individual.

To conclude this selective discussion of writing produced by boys, I want to turn now to a minority in whose accounts music was subordinated to sport. Given the biographical

invitation, they responded with accounts in which they brought another variant of popular practices of remembering into what were carefully negotiated appropriations of the task. For these boys, a primary self-positioning through music was unwelcome, but they nevertheless produced self-accounts which were almost more committed to a repertoire of 'personal', 'liminal' and 'emotive' moments than several of those who positioned themselves as 'knowing' about music. It may be that, in the context of this largely middle-class group of students, and in a school where musical knowledge and skill, though not of the popular kind, have been given a high prestige, the inscription of the self in accounts centred in sport was an assertion of a continuing class position. The competitive and bodily forms of male sport were drawn into an implicit refusal of the musical repertoire more widely shared in the group as a whole. Indeed, some evidence of self-conscious positioning as working-class emerged in these cases.

Paul

Paul's selection of tracks, untitled, undated, was hand-written. Paul writes of songs which recall 'things that have happened to people or things that I can relate to.' In fact, he names only five tracks: 'Eye of the Tiger', from Rocky III, 'because when watching the film the adrenalin starts flowing and now that song has the same effect'; 'Simply the

Best', 'kind of related to boxing because Chris Eubank has used [it] as his anthem'; 'Money for Nothing' by Dire Straits; 'Go West' by the Pet Shop Boys, 'it is not the song I like but the adaption of the song by the Arsenal supporters...it reminds me of when Arsenal won the European Cup Winners Cup last season and the happiness that went with it'; 'Abide with me', 'purely because of the fact that when they used to sing it in the FA cup final, the atmosphere must of been unbeli[e]vable with 120,000 people singing the song...I wish I could of been there.'

If 'Money for Nothing' seems incongruous among such explicitly sport related celebrations of competition and victory, his explanation draws it firmly into a class inflected discourse of individual aspiration: 'When I listen to it it gives me some inspiration because I know that some working-class people have made something of their life, they are stars and have made plenty of money, in some ways it gives me a bit of hope for the future.' Whatever other meanings, and other contexts, these songs may have becomes irrelevant to Paul's appropriation of them as emblematic of, and sustaining for, a class identity which is shared by only a very small minority of the group (cf. Walkerdine in Burgin, Donald and Kaplan, 1986).

Spencer

Spencer, in common with Paul, made substantial reference to sport. His self-positioning is particularly exact, counterposing the repetitive inscription of the indexical pronoun 'I' to all who are not 'I', 'some people' (see Harre and Gillett, 1994: pp.107-8):

> I would not say that I was a music lover and for this reason I have found it extremely difficult to find any songs that either describe or say something about me. Some people listen to music all the time but I am not one of those people. Some people only listen to one style of music that they love, I am not one of those people. I listen to the radio to keep up with the latest tunes and I occasionally buy singles, but I hardly ever buy albums because I normally only like the song and not the artist.

These unspecified others are plausibly a majority of those in the larger group to which, in the production of this self-account, he belonged. There is, in this context, also some effort to refuse the implication that his identity might be fixed in a relation to a specific 'artist'; in this respect, his insistence on a more partial and more ephemeral interest is comparable to that voiced by working-class boys in discussion together in Hackney. He, like them, refuses the risk of being taste-classified by others. Nevertheless, he does record, in a sparsely word-processed script from which he had omitted his name, some distinct preferences:

> One record that I have always like[d] is 'Chariots of Fire' From an early age I have been sports mad and extremely competitive and this tune always makes me want to go out and compete. It makes me think of the slow motion scene from the film, which

> sends a tingle down my spine every time. I did not particularly enjoy the film but the tune is brilliant and would probably be one of my 'Desert island discs'.
>
> Another song that inspires me is 'World in Motion' by New Order which was made with the assistance of the 1990 England world cup squad. This makes me think about the great world cup that England had and how we came so close to winning it. The song itself is not that great but the memories are. David Platt's last minute goal against Belgium in the quarter final was magical and Gary Lineker's in the semi final was superb. I have probably never felt better than the moment that goal went in.

The progression in each of the descriptions presented here is through the 'song' to its 'effect': it 'makes me want to go out', 'makes me think about' - to compete and to win or to remember (almost) doing so. For Spencer, as for Paul, the emotional dynamic of self-positioning in such a discourse of competitive aspiration appears to arise out of the coincidence of coming from a working-class family and into an intensely competitive school - with upward mobility clearly on their horizons. Music, here, may serve to connect remembered contexts with the repertoire of emotions produced by such a competitive discourse, but it is not ever 'in itself' the object of the emotions represented in this account. Music, for them, is not a primary symbolic resource in defining and representing their identities in this context and, to the contrary, some significant effort is apparent in their 'embedding' of their chosen 'songs' in other, 'non-musical', scenes.

For example, in both of the following accounts, the 'songs' are acknowledged as means to invoke or elicit particular fantasies or memories and to achieve a vicarious self-identification with male action scenarios. Despite listening to music, there is no self-positioning as a participant in music orientated youth cultures.

> A more modern song that makes me think is Bon Jovi's 'Blaze of Glory' and it talks about the exploits of Billy the Kid who is someone that I would have liked to have known, I admire his style and the song says how he would not just die peacefully but he would like to go out in a blaze of glory and that is what I would like to do.
>
> As football is my main hobby in life a song that I love to listen to is 'Alive and Kicking' by Simple Minds. This has only become a song that I would think of since SKY television used it in their campaign to promote the new FA Premier League and in the adverts they had the song playing and the pictures were of great goals, saves and tackles from the Premier League. So now whenever I hear the song, great memories of football come flooding back.

Spencer's last choices are entirely consistent with his earlier construction of a bounded self, set apart from the liberal middle-class milieu inhabited by the majority of the school's students:

> My final two songs are the national anthems of both Great Britain and the United States of America. First that of the USA, the 'Star Spangled Banner' I like it because I admire the way that although it is a national anthem they allow popular singers to adapt it their own way as if it were an ordinary song. The anthem sung by Whitney Houston at a Superbowl a few years back was great and made me think that I would like to be American. The words of the song are also significant to me, at the end when it talks about 'the land of the free and the home of the brave' really inspires me. 'God save

> the Queen' is a song that will always make me feel proud to be British. Ever since I can remember I knew the words and I always stand when I hear it played. Perhaps the best rendition of the national anthem is heard at FA Cup Finals because football fans are mostly male and they all love there country so they sing loud. I am pleased to say I have been part of two FA Cup Finals and the singing of the anthem just before kick off was exhilarating and it gave me a real buzz. This also makes me think of representing my country in the Olympics and I imagine how great it must feel to be standing on the top of the rostrum with a gold medal around your neck, knowing that you have won for queen and country.

To choose the British and American national anthems, in this context, appears to be a double gesture, certainly of further separation from the culture of the students, but also of defiant subversion of teachers' assumptions about 'young people'. Here, the songs are drawn into a discourse in which he further positions himself as a subject of, and actor for, nationhood and monarchy. Furthermore, sport is represented as a medium for the expression of loyalty to nationhood, just as, earlier, he submerged himself in the unified 'we' of England - '...the great world cup...and how we came so close to winning it'.

It is important, at this point, to recall that this piece of writing was a response to a specific and 'teacher' imposed task. As I have argued, the particular response has some relation to the student's social position and to his location within the context of the school and the group. But it is also

an attempt to do what was asked. In producing his response, he confirms himself as a student and thus his acceptance of the position assigned to him in a continuing, unequal, dialogue with the teacher. He was asked to represent himself in terms which were defined with reference to *Desert Island Discs*. The radio programme is open only to celebrities, to people who have achieved fame through sport, politics, music, theatre, literature and so forth. Here, the invitation to be positioned as a celebrity is engaged through a fantasy of ultimate victory in the Olympic Games, a fantasy identified realistically enough with the moment at which the British National Anthem is played. Read backwards from this achievement of celebrity, the rest of the account becomes a plausible fiction. This story of a sporting hero thus sustains his position as a student, responsive to the discursive regime imposed upon him, but also allows him to refuse some aspects of a liberal, middle-class culture.

So far, I have not examined the gendered features of these boys' self-accounts in any detail. However, before discussing examples of the girls' writing, some more expanded comments on the gender aspect need to be offered. For example, one feminist perspective on music, that of Susan McClary, includes the argument that an important tendency in centuries of discourse around music is to characterize it as a threat to social order and particularly to the maintenance of such order

through regimes of masculinity. Among Plato's anxieties about music was:

> ...the sensuous body as it can be aroused by the musics of women or ethnic groups noted for their 'laxness', such as the Lydians. What remain suitable for the Republic, then, are genres of music dedicated either to the martial discipline of the Spartans or to the moderate exchange of ideas through rhetoric. (McClary, in Ross and Rose, 1994: p.30).

Quoting St. Augustine, John of Salisbury and John Calvin, McClary argues that:

> One of the themes running through these citations is the fear of emasculation. In a culture rigidly structured in terms of a mind-body split, music's appeal to the body predisposes it to be assigned to the 'feminine' side of the axis...nothing less is at stake than masculinity itself and, by extension, the authority of church, state and patriarchy. (McClary, in Ross and Rose, 1994: p.31).

It could be argued that the boys who distance themselves from any explicit self-positioning within music are refusing an identification which, in this patriarchal tradition, would be read as feminine. However, the construction of music as 'bodily' and 'emotional', though familiar, can also be contrasted with its construction as abstract, mathematical and disembodied; either way, to pursue only one tendency in the cultural construction of music risks an essentialism (see Frith, 1996). Thus when McClary proposes 'that music is foremost among cultural "technologies of the body", that it is a site where we learn how to experience socially mediated patterns of kinetic energy, being in time, emotions, desire,

pleasure...' there is the possibility that she replicates the characterization of music central to 'masculinity itself' (McClary, in Ross and Rose, 1994: p.33). It is possible that for these boys, rather than for others in the group, music may have a 'feminine' connotation which they therefore overwhelm by subordinating music to male sport. But, as I have argued, that tactic does seem more motivated by class interests. The forms of 'masculinity' which they claim may be as important for their 'working-classness', in this context, as for their denial of 'femininity'.

In fact, there were many more boys in the group who did engage positively with music of various kinds. Rather than essentialize music as 'feminine' or 'physical', there is a need to consider 'music' as a diverse phenomenon which, as a unified category, or as a collection of disparate genres, is remade with divergent meanings in its inscription within particular discourses.[13] So, to conclude this discussion of the boys' writing I want to reaffirm that an understanding of their choices cannot be accomplished simply at the level of generalized cultural polarities but, as I have argued throughout this thesis, requires some specification of the social relations of the particular context and of how they act to sustain and reinflect those relations.

I want to devote the remainder of this chapter to a consideration of the writing produced by several of the girls in the group. Like the boys, they were involved in a process of selective remembering which, in its presentation, involved them in constructing a public taste persona. As in the examples already cited, there is some degree of self-conscious construction of themselves as 'adolescent' and as recalling liminal moments through the recovery of particular songs. However, it is apparent that these girls, to a greater extent than the majority of the boys, drew upon a discursive repertoire within which music seemed to be constructed as expressive of the self as interiority. Certainly, like the girls in Hackney, more evidence of self-positioning within discourses of sexuality was also present in their writing though, as already committed A Level students, the projection of themselves into 'educated futures' was hardly a matter of equivocation. Here, the writing could tactically unite the demands of various discourses, notably those of 'femininity' and of a popular psychology, to offer 'subjective depth', as itself the emblem of the 'personhood' on which their futures turn. These academically successful girls are accustomed to expect to have a great deal to say about themselves and, in response to my request, it was quite 'natural' for them to do so.[14]

Angela

Angela's account, a corrected hand-written text, began with this:

> 'Summertime' - Fresh Prince and DJ Jazzy Jeff.
> I can't remember when I first heard this song, but it was definitely on a sunny day. I managed to record it on to a compilation tape of summer songs, which I played all day, every day, throughout the summer, every summer. So its a very nostalgic song which I feel represents my 'laid-back' self. Its also my form of escapism during the colder seasons. Just listening to it creates the feeling of warmth...'an air of love and of happiness...' that I associate with summer. I like the beat, the lyrics and the continuity of the lyrics.

As I have suggested, the 'summer' motif recurs across a high proportion of the accounts produced by this group. It is evidence of the popularly circulated equation between the remembering of distinct seasons and the particular music at one time coincident with them. For the music radio audience positioned as 'adolescent', 'summers' are constructed as a series of distinctive thresholds to be actively remembered, and to be self-consciously constructed as memorable as-they-are-lived. Such a motif is not at all peculiar to the girls, but, in Angela's account, it is used to represent a 'section' of her 'self'. Indeed, the assembly of her choices suggests the containment of difference and even contradiction 'within' the depth of her subjectivity. This is an engagement with the discourse of 'adolescence' which takes the implicit attributions of inconsistency and irresponsibility, of emotionality and fantasy, and incorporates them into the self-

construction of a reflective, developing, 'interesting' person. Like Margaret, in the Hackney group, Angela achieves a tactical compliance with her educational location as a successful female student. The next two choices exemplify this:

> 'Soul to Squeeze' - Red Hot Chilli Peppers
> I first heard this while I was crammed in the back of a car with 2 other guys. We were on our way to an all-day rock festival with the last band being my favourite band at the time, 'Soundgarden'. Only last summer (1994) this happened during my holiday in Canada. The guy on my right was a close friend of mine and had paid for my ticket and organised the drive up there. It was his tape we were listening to, which he had made especially for the journey. The song came on, and immediately all the men in the car stopped conversation and mimed along to the words (playing the instruments too). It was the most perfect song in the world to be heard. The sun was shining, I was travelling at 90 miles an hour on a freeway, I was on my way to see the best concert of all time (fully paid for), no parents, no restrictions and lots of men!
>
> 'Daughter' - Pearl Jam
> Not particularly one of my favourite tracks of all time (that changes according to mood and season), but it is a representation of a section of my personality concerned with the relationship between me and my parents. Coming from a close-knit, and often very protective, family I sometimes feel like wanting to break away and become independent so that I can do what I want all the time and not have to feel guilty or indebted towards my parents. Other times I am so desperate to please them and make them proud so that they can see the result of all their efforts. I also want them to see me as a 'person' not just their daughter, their possession, something they can control.

Angela's remaining tracks - 'Anna Begins' by Counting Crows, 'The Reality Bites Soundtrack' and 'Slide Away' by Oasis - are accompanied by a similar mix of locating commentary with

reflection on the various 'sections' of her 'personality'. The text, as a whole, juxtaposes differently inflected self-representations:

> 1. summer, nostalgia, my 'laid-back' self;
> 2. a teen-movie scenario - 'no parents, no restrictions and lots of men!';
> 3. intra-familial adolescent angst;
> 4. 'Anna Begins' - 'I first heard it in my room when listening to the album'...'a beautiful song...I listen to it when I'm feeling in a sensitive mood';
> 5. 'the "Reality Bites" film...contains a character that I would like to be - a graduate with a job in the media, living with her 3 best friends and making a documentary about them';
> 6. 'Slide Away'...'the melody is surprisingly catchy and stays in my head throughout the school day - enabling me to get through it'.

Thus, as I have suggested, each song appears to anchor a distinctive way of representing herself, in part because of the particular lyrics and musical genre of each track, but also because of the way in which various desirable identities can be constructed around them - sometimes by recovering the memory of specific occasions, sometimes by suggesting the circumstances in which the song might be literally heard or remembered. As I will argue in the following discussion of Christina's writing, there is some basis for suggesting that this self-account is also an assertion that middle-class girls do have fun, that their identities are not contained by their academic futures.

Christina

Though particular bands, even particular tracks, do recur in the girls' accounts - Nirvana and Oasis for example - and can therefore be read as evidence of a particular socially differentiated and generational experience, rather more extensive similarities can be identified at the level of the shared categories through which their writing is organized: summer holidays, best friendships, relationships with boyfriends, relationships with parents, coping with intense emotions.

Christina's account, abbreviated here, usefully illustrates the typical repertoire of 'emotional thresholds' and 'relational contexts' drawn upon in the girls' production of their self accounts. Once again, 'summer' emerges as a prominent motif,[15] 'remembered' in terms which seem derived from the common, informal and conversational exchange of such memories rather than from any particular experience. Indeed, the elements of memory become combined with imagined settings, 'a sandy beach late at night'. To some extent, such generic consistency suggests self-positioning within quite general, and popularly disseminated, accounts of what the lived experience of youth should be:

> Wild World by Maxi Priest...a big hit in Cyprus while I was on holiday there a few years ago. Everywhere I went it was playing - in the bars and clubs and blaring from loud stereos on the beach. It reminds me of the people I met there and the great times we had together. Everytime I hear the song now it makes me feel as though I am back there

> - I can close my eyes and dream myself in Cyprus. It is also a song which epitomises the season of Summer. It is of the reggae genre, fresh and mellow, something you can really imagine dancing to on a sandy beach late at night.

This, in common with several others,[16] while undoubtedly representing some actual experience, is also an appropriation of a public discourse, to be found in teenage magazines. By reconstructing memory through such discourse, the writer positions herself, in this context, as belonging to one popular, but also particular, construction of youth. Her choice of 'Lithium' (by Nirvana) is similarly located, both geographically and discursively, and introduces the trope of friendship:

> This song reminds me of my holiday in Newquay last year. It was after my GCSE's and I was there with my friend Nici. The clubs in Newquay were quite grungey in their style of music and this song, a grunge anthem, was the favourite being played everywhere and reminds me of the fun Nici and I had.

Other choices more emphatically represent the intersection of friendships with liminal experience and, again, the effect is to position the writer as a girl 'with friends', who has 'a good time'. To some extent, therefore, her account seems to sustain the kind of social identity which, through from earlier childhood, is of such intense and public importance in the lives of girls (see James, 1993; Hey, 1995; 1997) but does so, again, by appropriating the popular discourse of teenage magazines. Christina thus positions herself as more like other

'ordinary' girls and less the 'brainy' special case at this highly selective school. It may be that to write in the forms of popular teenage magazines, is to seek 'normalization'. Valerie Hey has commented on this:

> For the middle class girls the working class girls 'abnormality' centred upon their 'excessive' heterosexuality - 'jailbait' as one of them told me. Hence working class girls according to this discourse were **over-feminized.** Conversely, working class girls viewed middle class girls as **'under-feminized'** because their 'brains' disqualified them from the feminine category altogether, and thus from claims upon the 'really important' and central markers of (hetero)sexual self-identity. (Hey, 1995)[17]

Less elaborately than in the more substantial assignments produced by the girls in Hackney, here several of the girls adopt a more muted claim to a sexuality which, in the terms observed by Hey, they are not supposed to possess. So, in explaining her choice of 'Gett Off' (by Prince) she writes:

> This song takes me back to the third year in senior school. My best friend at the time Cassie and I were very much into dancing and Prince. When Gett Off was released it was our dream come true - a dance track by Prince. We choreographed our own dance for it. Later on that year we went to see prince perform at Earl's Court and this song was the highlight of the evening.

By choosing a notoriously sexually explicit song and, more generally, by adopting a discourse more broadly shared by other 'normal', sexual girls, a self-positioning resistant to the academic and non-sexual connotations of the school context is suggested. Similarly, in attaching a particular anecdote to

'Always' (by Bon Jovi), she introduces a statement of her position as someone's 'girlfriend':

> This is one of those songs which makes my spine tingle every time I hear it. It makes me think of my boyfriend Paul and has quite a romantic story behind it...A few days later he gave me the single of Always accompanied by a single red rose and it has been one of our songs ever since.

However, as I noted above, to both retain friendships with girls and to move on into distinctively new phases, and acquire new friends, is also an important feature of her self-representation. For example, her account of 'Alive' (by Pearl Jam) is strongly marked as relocating her beyond those earlier phases of 'adolescence' similarly disowned by the girls in Hackney (see, particularly, Chapter 4). She writes:

> This song signalled a new era in my life. It reminds me of new friends and a new style. This was the beginning of my love for indie music...My taste changed from mainstream pop to indie, grunge, acid jazz. It also marked the beginning of a special friendship with a girl named Steph and it is a song we both adore.

Finally, her account of 'Live Forever' (by Oasis) is further evidence of the importance in this context of being someone who goes out and participates in the public life of youth:

> This is one of my favourite songs off one of the best albums I have ever heard. It reminds me of the Oasis concert which I went to just before Christmas. This was the song everyone was waiting for and when Oasis performed it the entire audience erupted into verse in unison. It was an amazing atmosphere and experience marking a brilliant concert.

Thus, in this account of an 'adolescence' by no means confined to the bedroom, she further confirms her public identity as more than a clever and conscientious student.

Emily

As I have suggested, other girls offered accounts in which much the same repertoire of elements is combined in explaining the selection of tracks. For both boys and girls, the request had involved asking them to represent themselves by selecting material from a cultural domain which is already heavily constructed as sexual, as 'bodily' and as 'affective'. Many of the boys did choose to write about 'songs' which they could assimilate to various discourses in which 'bodily' and, sometimes, intensely emotive states were integral features (listening to death metal in one case, to the National Anthem in another). If a consistent difference between the girls' and the boys' self-positioning in relation to such a domain can be identified, it is evident in the tendency of the majority of the boys to rationalize the 'states' they describe and thus to recover some distance from, and implicit control over, the experience they recall. The girls, though certainly also achieving distance through the act of writing itself, produced accounts in which self-positioning as emotional, sometimes as implicitly sexual, was not qualified by the more overt social and political recovery of emotion evident in, for example, the writing of David and Nicholas. Consistent with the argument

that, here, middle-class girls lay claim to sexuality, it is also the case that they position themselves as 'emotional' and 'physically moved' in ways which, again, contradict the negative equation, in popular discourses, of academic success with emotional depletion.[18] For example, this account translates the common attribution of 'adolescent' emotional volatility into its affirmation:

> Manic St. Preachers - Suicide is Painless and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa - O My beloved father - Both are 'mood' songs. MSP is more of when in a depressed mood to put the song on full volume and lie on your floor listening to the words is probably the most moving thing. Putting on Dame Kiri manages to make me so relaxed when in any mood. Especially in an incredibly angry and physically tensed time putting on this song, deep meaningful breathing and then moving your arms and then whole body to this song makes me feel so completely overcome with a 'happiness of rage' - hard to put into words...But one song that I do want to mention apart from the above [Nirvana - All Apologies] has to be Janis Joplin 'Piece of my heart' because she sings it with so much feeling that you are just speechless after it. It is such a drive around on a hot day with windows open and music on full blast type of song.

Among her other selections, which she explained more publicly in her self-presentation to the group (her writing appeared to be primarily 'rough notes' for such a presentation), Emily, like Christina, cited music which could represent the formation of a 'best friendship' ["Bangles - Olivia + Me"]. She thus, again, claimed a social position for herself which, in its public visibility, has more importance for girls than for a majority of the boys. But, to reiterate, she did so by also demonstrating how at ease and how fluently

self-confident she could be in front of almost thirty people in an educational setting. So, whatever the interests fulfilled by the choices she declared and the experiences to which she connected them, her position as an accomplished student was never compromised.

Conclusions

Bourdieu's incisive comment that the 'young' 'allow themselves to be kept in the state of 'youth', that is, irresponsibility, enjoying the freedom of irresponsible behaviour in return for renouncing responsibility' should not, as I argued above, be given a transhistorical status (Bourdieu, 1986: p.478). Even the belief that youth is a phase of life which should be both 'pleasurable' and 'memorable' has a particular historical inflection, though some elements of such a discourse on youth are undoubtedly enduring. Here, it is important to recognize how such a discourse is taken up by particular young people and what purposes they achieve in articulating it in preference to other possible, and available, discourses. I have suggested that, in every case, multiple interests are served by their self-accounts. Within this group, different discourses are invoked - some allowing a rhetorical self-positioning as political, others claiming an 'expertise' in the domain of music, and others giving priority to 'pleasure' and 'emotionality'. Some of the students combined elements of all of these tendencies. There is the potential in this to

raise, with the students, questions around the meaning of 'adolescence' and 'youth' for them and to pursue, more explicitly, the political and historical context of their expectations. Such a priority, in teaching, might also inform further research. In the next, concluding chapter, I want to develop a more concrete review of the implications of this study for media pedagogy.

A further important emphasis of this chapter has been upon the embedding of music in the domain of popular discourse and the need, therefore, to consider 'tastes in music' as features of discourse rather than in terms of a more abstracted relationship between the formal characteristics of music and particular subjectivities. In this context, taste has been reviewed in terms of its tactical definition between situated social actors; 'taste' has been considered as a complex rhetorical feature of self-positioning. I have argued, therefore, that the overdetermined enactment of social relations within specific educational contexts significantly complicates the more generalized classification of taste categories in relation to class affiliations for 'adolescents' with access to a wide array of cultural forms.

To conclude, what this chapter has shown, in reporting the findings of a more narrowly focused period of research at a selective school, is that there are significant gender

differences in the relation to popular music claimed by these students but that such gender differences are also strongly inflected by negotiations of class positioning within a context defined by high levels of educational achievement (see Appendix 3). Indeed, in relation to the more extensive Hackney study, the major overarching contrast which I have emphasised is that between students positioned as working-class and negotiating their imminent departure from school and these, predominantly middle-class, students whose futures have been provisionally resolved by embarking on the A Level route through 'post-compulsory' education (cf. Frith, 1983). The A Level students, advancing towards an educationally framed horizon, and alert to every opportunity to make cultural capital of their experience, took up my requests, willingly. In this sense, they put so much of 'themselves' into the *Desert Island Discs* project because they were accustomed to seeing that what they 'give' would be, if not in this case immediately and literally, returned with cultural and educational value inscribed upon it (cf. Bourdieu, 1992). It was thus in this phase of my research that the difficulty of drawing working-class students into school work on 'transient knowledge' became, by contrast, more evidently a feature of their 'non-investment' in the 'educated' career trajectories pursued by the Edmonton students. The difficulties reported in Chapter 4 (and Appendix 1) illustrated the awkwardness of talking about pop music in school, but can also be understood

as indications of a relative disengagement, in approaching the GCSE threshold, from 'plans of life' grounded in continuing full-time education.[19]

In the next, concluding, chapter, I want to review my research and suggest some of its implications for Media Studies teaching. I also want to indicate further possibilities for research from within that practice and to suggest some of the limitations of my own enquiry.

Notes

1. Year 12 in 1994-1995 (a cohort born 1977-1978); the Hackney students in Year 11 (1992-1993) belong to the birth cohort of 1976-1977 and are thus, on average, one year older than the students discussed in this chapter.

2. This was apparent, to some extent, in an A Level teachers' seminar which I ran at the 1995 A Level Media Studies conference at the Institute of Education.

3. An important aspect of this was the need to define myself by 'not liking' and certainly *not owning* the records my older brother liked - thus no Rolling Stones, for example.

4. Speaking of his sister, Aretha Franklin, the Reverend Cecil Franklin describes the 'inter-subjective' character of her performance:

'It's a combination of electricity and empathy. She generates the electricity, and the empathy comes with her being able not only to feel what all those people are experiencing but able to really experience the same things they are experiencing. You listen to her and it's just like being in church. She does with her voice exactly what a preacher does with his when he **moans** to a congregation. That moan strikes a responsive chord in the congregation and somebody answers you back with their own moan, which means I know what you're moaning about because I feel the same way. So you have something sort of like a thread spinning out and touching and tieing everybody together in a shared experience just like getting happy and shouting together in church.' (Sanders, 1971: p.126).

5. But, for a more recent account of social space as 'multi-dimensional', see Bourdieu, 1992: pp. 229-51.

6. See Connell, 'The black box of habit on the wings of history: critical reflections on the theory of social reproduction, with suggestions on how to do it better', in Connell (1983); Frow (1987); Mander (1987), pp. 427-453; and Shiach (1993).

7. Both of the media teachers involved with the class (Pete Fraser and Nikki Blackborow) acted as key 'informants', providing me with specific contextual knowledge to which I would not otherwise have had access.

8. The 'time-use' diaries in Appendix 2 might be read as, very ambiguous, evidence of the uneasy transaction in which they were produced.

9. Harvey (1989): p.292.

10. Some of the problems of trying to make formal connections between subjectivity and music are discussed in Shepherd and Giles-Davis, 'Music, Text and Subjectivity' in Shepherd, (1991); Willis, (1978); Middleton (1990).

11. Middleton (1990) suggests:

'We do not...choose our musical tastes freely; nor do they reflect our 'experience' in any simple way. The involvement of subjects in particular musical pleasures has to be constructed; indeed, such construction is part and parcel of the production of subjectivity. In this process, subjects themselves - however `decentred' - have a role to play (of recognition, assent, refusal, comparison, modification); but it is an *articulatory*, not a simplistically creative or responsive role. Subjects participate in an 'interpellative dialectic', and this takes specific forms in specific areas of cultural practice.' (p.249).

12. My nephew, also in year 12 studying A levels, responded to my written request to him with the following:

'Oasis - Supersonic ...It means a lot to me because it reminds me of last summer which was the best time I've ever had - I'd just finished my exams...and I spent 4 months just dossing about with me mates, every day we would hang about in town, then play footy and then get pissed - I can't think of anything else I'd rather do. It was ace, the world cup was on, and every night there'd be loads of us out playing football and drinking - we had the world cup final every night - and even had a traffic cone for a trophy...We had the Oasis album about a month before it came out - through someone who works in the local record shop, and we used to listen to it all the time. This song reminds me of that summer because on the last day before I started at college, a busload of me and about 15 mates all went to watch Oasis at the Hacienda in Manchester there was something very special about the whole thing - the band, the venue, the City, the time. I will remember it forever.'

13. However, see Green (1997) for a wide-ranging and finely detailed argument about the gendered character of music as performance, as composition and in music education. See, also, Frith (1996).

14. In a recorded discussion of selected extracts from this chapter conducted by Pete Fraser (21.12.95), Angela commented:

'...he's implying in here...that becasue we had to take an exam to get in, that we're all from middle, that we've all had good upbringing as in good schools, went to good schools in good areas, and so that's why we were able to get in because you know we were taught that it's good to be clever and not just to be hard...but I don't think I'm middle-class'

and

'It just goes to show that what we say, someone, someone thinks it's quite interesting and that it's not just gonna get thrown away like everything else, everything else that we wrote, all the other essays that we do just get thrown away...'.

15. Here music appears to serve as a means to fix an intersection of place and time in memory. See Harvey (1989): 'And if it is true that time is always memorialized not as flow, but as memories of experienced places and spaces, then history must indeed give way to poetry, time to space, as the fundamental material of social expression. The spatial image (particularly the evidence of the photograph) then asserts an important power over history.' (p.218).

16. Carrie, for example:

'No Woman, no cry - Bob Marley. This was my holiday song for this year. I went on tour to Israel for three weeks. A lot of the time was spent travelling around by coach. We played this song a lot as its very soothing and mellow. Most of the time we were extremely tired and we were travelling long distances at night. We played this song whilst looking at the stars etc and falling asleep travelling through the middle of the desert.'

17. Valerie Hey, '"Bitching" and "Little Bits of garbage": Re-situating ethnographic evidence of Girls' Friendships', Paper presented to CREG seminar series, Institute of Education, 7th June 1995, p.19.

18. In *Just Seventeen*, for example, one problem page letter complained of a girl's problem with her 'brainy' reputation. The advice (with some irony?) was to read school books concealed inside a copy of the magazine.

19. See Lindley, R. (1989): p.92.

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Chapter 7: Conclusions

Introduction

In this final chapter I want to review the research represented in the preceding discussion. As I have argued, I conducted the research by progressively focusing in on encounters between teacher and taught in classroom settings where popular music was made a topic in the Media Studies curriculum. Thus some of what I did at the beginning was not followed through in my subsequent enquiries (see Appendix 1) but was, nevertheless, an important part of that process of progressive focusing. From the 'pilot' study, for example, I learnt that the institutional character of my encounters with students could not be set aside but should be made integral to the central argument of the thesis. It was through my reflections on the uneasy and awkward aspects of these institutional exchanges that the *difficulty* of 'doing pop music' in school became a continuing and substantive concern. The difficulty of attempts to engage with the informal cultures of students in the formal context of school is *especially* apparent in the case of pop music and I anticipated this, to some extent, in delineating its neglect by media education. This neglect was the first of the three broad themes outlined in my foreword and discussed in Chapter 1. A further thematic means to frame this difficulty has been provided by a concern with ways of negotiating my own identity (adolescent, teacher, researcher) in relation to the

students. This sense of the relational negotiation of identities between myself and the students has been discussed in Chapter 3 and is an aspect of the second of the themes introduced in the foreword. A third thematic frame through which to consider the difficulty of 'doing pop music' has been constructed upon an account of differential class (and gender) 'investments' in formal education (cf. Willis, 1977). This theme, if mapped only across two sites, has been sustained throughout my analysis of the Hackney and the Edmonton students' responses to the teaching initiatives in which I was involved.

I need to acknowledge a significant tension in my attempts to bring this thesis to a 'rounded' conclusion. I have intended that my research should inform the development of future practice in media teaching and I include some outline proposals in this chapter. But it has not been possible to formulate an account of 'positive' implications without repeatedly reiterating that to attempt to study pop music in the formal school context is likely to be fraught with the complications and the uneasiness that I have described. The thesis cannot inform practice in the sense that it might provide 'reliable' practical solutions and optimistic reassurances. But nor is it merely an extended warning that nothing worthwhile can be done. In the end, it intends to inform practice by suggesting, in some detail, what kinds of

difficulties might arise and why they may do so. Teachers, and others, may thus use my account as a comparative guide in the circumstances of their own practice and as a basis for continuing reflections upon the negotiation of their identities in relation to their students.

If one intention in my account has been to inform the practice of teaching, a further concern has been to illustrate some of the vicissitudes, and the strengths, of attempting to combine a research practice with teaching, to do research, in effect, in the mode of 'reflective practice'. Again, the intention has not been to argue against further research of this kind but to define more precisely what kinds of data can be collected by becoming a 'reflective practitioner', and what kinds of data remain thus unavailable. To reaffirm the argument presented in Chapter 3, I am suggesting how peculiar and how limited to the specific institutional relation between teacher and taught, the data provided by reflective practice, or by this version of action research, will be. This research should not therefore be confused with 'doing ethnography' (Green and Bloome, forthcoming) even if, to varying degrees, 'reflective practice' can be informed by an 'ethnographic perspective'. The argument I have been able to construct in this thesis is neither ethnographic nor, primarily, about the wider

formation of youth cultures but is, rather, very specifically situated, engaging with, and reflecting upon, the local detail of exchanges between teacher and taught in the Media Studies classroom.

Summary

I began this thesis with Simon Frith's study of young people's musical tastes, in Keighley in 1972. He argued then that the differences between the various youth groups lay mainly in their varied 'leisure needs and interests', adding that 'Keighley's youth culture patterns were an aspect of the town's social structure, its relations of production' (Frith, 1983: p.212). I have not attempted to replicate Frith's survey or to follow his wider, sociological, framing of the relationship between taste/musical knowledge and social structure. However, there are clearly ways in which his distinction between middle-class Sixth Formers, working-class school leavers and a somewhat defiant, 'hip elite' can be seen to correspond to the divisions I have mapped across just two schools in North London. There are similarities between the students in Edmonton and the Keighley Sixth Formers, between *some* of the students at the Hackney comprehensive and the working-class group described by Frith. Equally, some of the students in Hackney (Margaret and Abby, for example) and some of those in Edmonton (David, perhaps), could be compared to the hip figures in Frith's account. To some extent, it is

undeniable that aspects of the social configurations outlined by Frith have persisted through to the present, some 25 years later. However, my interest has focused progressively upon the forms in which individual students have variously positioned themselves in the contexts made available by the teaching of 'pop' in Media Studies. This has involved more emphasis on the specificity of positions in the institutional relation between teacher and taught. Though I do not deny the importance of Frith's sketch of the political economy of leisure, my focus has been bounded by the data I have collected in specific institutional encounters. I have thus qualified, from the particularity of my data base, his emphasis on the determination of identity by social position. Furthermore, despite taking up Frith's initiative, my intention has been to open up possibilities for future practice in media teaching, rather than to do 'the sociology of youth'. In effect, in the conduct of my research, I have progressively refocused my enquiries so that, though looking back to Frith, I have not adopted strategies which would enable me to provide an ethnographic sequel to his study. To reiterate, locating my research in a particular educational practice, rather than in Sociology or Cultural Studies, I have attended more to forms of self-representation within classrooms, than to the 'youth cultures' outside them. In doing so, I have wanted to re-emphasise that schools, where most young people spend so much time together, are places in

which aspects of the informal culture of young people are both sustained and (re)negotiated.

In Chapter 1, I reviewed the fields of media and music education and considered, selectively, the limitations and the possibilities of previous efforts to engage with popular music in secondary schools. The insulation of the two fields from each other has been one significant constraint in the past development of practice and, in bringing aspects of both together in this thesis, I have sought to initiate a dialogue between disciplines. There is considerable scope for further exchange both in terms of practice and in the formulation of theoretical perspectives (see, for example, McClary, 1991; Goodwin, 1993; Frith, 1996; Green, 1997). The emphasis of my argument through the chapter, that music is strongly socially embedded and that it cannot be isolated from the negotiation of particular social relations, underpins the subsequent move into the empirical study of practice within classrooms. 'Knowledge about music' is thus seen as necessarily an unstable and negotiated domain between teacher and taught.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed some aspects of past debates about 'youth' and 'adolescence' and introduced elements of a discursive approach to young people's tactical negotiations of the categories to which they are assigned. The chapter thus provides a background account of issues central to a

practice in which adults seek to address young people and to make aspects of their current informal experience a matter for formal study. Building upon this account, in subsequent chapters, I have argued that young people, positioned both as 'adolescent' and as 'belonging' to a working-class or middle-class milieu, within the social relations of schools, lay tactical claim to various kinds of power. For example, popular discourses of sexuality figured in the discursive tactics adopted by many of the students (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6). Against the view that these are the natural expressions of 'adolescent' development, I have argued that they are highly overdetermined modes of self-identification in a cultural and institutional context where age-relations are organized through a division between childhood, 'adolescence' and adulthood and the power relations they entail. To amplify the point, the attraction of 'work' and of 'sexuality', as discursive resources, is that they provide a repertoire for the assertion of non-child identities and thus, in effect, ways of claiming a degree of social power denied by the students' location as 'adolescents in school'. But I have wanted to avoid endorsing such claims to social power as simply expressive of youthful agency. They are more problematic.

It is improbable that making popular culture an object of study can ever, in itself, produce a radical transformation

of the social relations of teaching and learning (Buckingham, 1990; Richards, 1992). To teach about popular music is no exception. But the distinctive importance, and difficulty, of putting music into the Media Studies curriculum is that it thus intersects more sharply with the 'privatized and private domain' (see Hey 1997: pp.143-5). Teaching about pop, which sounds so banal, actually takes teaching into questions of intimacy and affectivity, questions to which the practice of media education needs a more considered response. I have referred to 'social self-understanding' as one of the purposes of media education (cf. Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994: p.109), arguing that it should provide a means for students to reflect on their location in both the microcultural relations of 'adolescence' and the, integrally connected, discourses of popular (music) culture. In this respect, teaching about pop music might enable students to become more reflexively aware of how their routes from 'adolescence' into adulthood are negotiated, in part, through the repertoires of difference available in such music. *These are big aspirations.* I will return to them later in this chapter, in outlining some proposals for practice.

In Chapter 3, I have provided an extended discussion of the progress of my research, including a chronology of its conduct and the occasions for which each of the provisional analyses of data was prepared. I have explained how and why I

progressively refocused the research through from the 'pilot' study in June-July 1992 to the work with A Level students in 1995. In this lengthy account, I have emphasised that I chose to locate the research within the institutional relation between teacher and taught and to engage with data peculiar to, and thus limited by, classroom encounters in Media Studies. In doing so, I chose not to pursue more diverse forms of engagement with the students and thus progressively closed off the collection of other kinds of data and suspended any wider aspirations to do an ethnography of music in the lives of young people (see Appendix 1). The advantage of the approach that I have pursued, in taking the position of a 'reflective practitioner', is that I have thus situated my enquiry within the social relations of classrooms and within the practice which I have sought to inform. To seek relations with students to which teachers, on the whole, do not have access became unnecessary to the central focus of the thesis. The limitation is that what might have been elicited from the students beyond the nexus of teacher and taught has remained unavailable to me.

Chapter 4, the first of three data chapters, explored discussions with two groups of students conducted as evaluations of work-in-progress for the GCSE in Media Studies. Here, I have presented extracts from the two sessions to show something of the difficulty of talking about

popular music, as an object of study, in this formal context. I wanted to illustrate the embeddedness of what they could say about music in the social relations of the groups and in their relation to myself as an adult and a teacher. In these exchanges, differences of gender and of age were especially evident though, as I have argued, they should not be regarded as fixed attributes of individuals but as positions taken up in the tactical negotiation of the encounter. Moreover, as there has been so little attention given to popular music in Media Studies, there were no obvious precedents, no easily available vocabularies, from which to draw in developing a discussion which might aspire to the forms 'appropriate' to this formal context. For these students, in the last months of their final year at the school, it was also less than clear why they should seek to articulate their experience of popular music, a 'transient knowledge', in forms which might translate such experience into knowledge to which educational value could be attributed. In this respect, if unevenly, they enacted what has been widely characterised as a working-class relation to schooling (see Willis, 1977; Corrigan, 1979; CCCS Education Group II, 1991).

In Chapter 5, I have presented an analysis of the Hackney students' GCSE assignments, written in response to the Music-Audience unit which I co-taught with the Head of English. Again, this analysis draws attention to the students'

negotiations of their position as pupils in school and as 'invited' to bring their informal knowledge into the production of work for assessment by their teachers. I have read their work as a negotiation of school and commercial genres, drawing the terms of my analysis from Hodge and Kress (1988). I have also emphasised the gendered relation to this task evident in the variable responses of the girls and the boys. To some extent, it has been possible to read their assignments as instances of their enactment of femininity and masculinity in this school setting. Here, again, the consideration of gender could not be separated from the theme of class and its implication in their orientation to school work. For example, as I noted in Chapter 4, Stephen drew attention to the limits of the classroom as a context for studying popular music and suggested, if tentatively, that a 'studio' might be a more useful place in which to learn. From his comments, which may be read in terms of a particular masculine claim to a work identity, and from my analysis of other students' work in Chapter 5 (see Margaret for example), it is possible to derive a wider argument for the provision of settings in which students can be more than 'pupils' - with less of the subordination the latter term implies.

Through my discussion of the assignments in Chapter 5, I am thus concerned both with what this data enables me to say about the relation of the students to the constrained task

imposed upon them and, implicitly, with how less conventionally classroom centred practices might enable students and teachers to (re)negotiate their exchanges with each other. For example, by contrast with the classroom, workplaces, of which television or sound recording studios are salient instances, appear attractive because they offer 'work-identities' and thus a greater degree of power than that routinely allowed to young people in school. The educational experiences which are possible within school classrooms tend to confine 'children' to being 'pupils' and adults to being 'teachers'. However, it is necessary to explore arrangements in which, still as students, learning can be achieved through forms of production (see Buckingham, Grahame, Sefton-Green, 1995). This might also imply a 're-positioning' of students as more than the risky and irresponsible 'adolescents' which, at 14, 15 and 16, schools expect them to be. It may also make teachers more than just experts in educationally framed knowledge, skilled only in the internal discourses of the school and its subjects (see Richards, 1996b; 1997). Moreover, doing 'studio work' need not entail a literal removal from the classroom setting for, clearly, the actual space of a classroom can be, if only partially and temporarily, both physically and discursively reconstructed.[1] Processes of learning, often regarded as peculiarly dependent on the contexts provided by formal education, might thus be more fully recognised as also

occurring in, and through, other contexts and the working relationships they allow (see Fornas et al, 1995; Buckingham, Grahame and Sefton-Green, 1995).

In Chapter 6, the last of the three data chapters, I have reported an initiative involving a form of autobiographical writing not usually regarded as appropriate to Media Studies. As a form very much located in English, and regarded as somewhat 'personal', it can appear much less conceptually explicit than those more theoretically framed analyses favoured by Media Studies at A Level. This, relatively brief, phase of my research was productive of substantial data. As A Level students, beyond the threshold of GCSEs and the end of compulsory schooling, it was not surprising that they were more willing to write, and at length, than some of those in the GCSE group. Additionally, however, the more settled educational trajectories of students in a selective and highly academic school contributed to the 'willing' translation of informal cultural experience into educationally valued forms. Here, I have argued, the students were more accustomed to investing themselves in the production of legitimate cultural capital. I have analyzed their writing in terms of a class and age differentiated framing but, as in earlier chapters, I have also drawn attention to the gendered differentiation of their engagement with the task. Again, then, it is possible to argue that

their writing involves the enactment of particular versions of femininity and masculinity but also inflected by negotiations of class positions within the immediate context of the group and in the wider middle-class milieu of the school (see, also, Appendix 3). Of course, in many ways, this does seem to be a much more successful research, and teaching, initiative.[2] However, 'success' here is, perhaps primarily, a matter of self-investment in the achievement of an educationally legitimated cultural capital (cf. Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994) and the implications for further practice are thus not at all straightforward. Media Studies, which emerged as one strand in a wider effort to bring the informal cultural experience of all young people into the school curriculum, might seem, in this instance, to have been appropriated as a means to secure cultural capital by those already most likely to succeed within the more traditional curriculum. Of course, I would not want to preclude such students from their engagement with Media Studies but this does suggest, again, that putting popular culture into the curriculum does not easily eliminate divisions between unequally situated groups of students (cf. Connell, 1993).

Implications for Practice

I want to extend the review of my classroom research in this section with more emphasis on possibilities for practice. In *Changing the Future* (1991), echoing both Vygotsky (1962;

1978) and Gramsci (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971) it is argued that a future curriculum:

> ...would aim to move between - on the one hand - issues arising from the lives of learners and - on the other - the general relationships which structured those issues and those lives. Likewise, it would move between everyday common sense and formally-organized conceptual systems. It would not centre itself on a universalism that concealed the presence of specific social interests; nor would it limit itself to a 'curriculum of everyday life', confined to the local and particular. (Chitty, 1991: p.85).

In my 'pilot' study (see Appendix 1), there was a marked tendency to make a priority of eliciting the 'local and particular' and, in my subsequent enquiries, much of the data could be similarly categorized as belonging to 'everyday life'. Within the research that I was able to do, it was not possible to return to the same class, or even the same school (Hackney) to 'reteach' the students in the light of the prior enquiry (though see Appendix 3). Thus the implications for teaching suggested here, though concrete, have not been tried out through any further, systematic, teaching initiatives. I would have liked to be able to go back and do it all again but, as I have explained in Chapter 3, the constraints of individual, part-time, research and the limits set by the priorities of particular departments, and particular teachers, made such an extension of the research impractical. Nevertheless, in each phase of the research important possibilities for teaching can be identified.

Even where the data consists largely of anecdote, evasion and tactical self-positioning, there are potential connections with 'larger' debates (as in Chapter 4, for example). Furthermore, though I did not pursue many of the issues raised by my 'pilot' study, they are clearly worth revisiting as themes to be explored in teaching. For example, there was plenty of scope to explore family histories, migrations, and the partially overlapping experience of transnational cultural networks (cf. Lipsitz, 1994). Within that framework, and not excluding our own explicit involvement here as teachers, there would be some value in considering how such particular histories locate, and differentiate, us in relation to the marketing of music. Here too, the polarity of the authentic::inauthentic (cf. McRobbie, 1994: p.174), or of the immediate and the debased (see Archer, 1996), could be anchored concretely in terms of lived social relations, both familial and more widely inter-generational. References to parents' collections of music, and to their tastes, which I did not follow up in any detail, would allow a productive movement back and forth from the immediacy of student interests to more broadly historical matters. The dynamics of Alan's aesthetic 'conservatism' (Appendix 1) was just one, intriguing, starting point. The domestic context itself, its physical organization, and the technologies it contains, could become a focus for further investigation. Recalling Margaret's account (Appendix 1), it

is not difficult to see that students might well find representing the internal divisions of household space, its social uses, and the intricacy of intra-familial negotiations of both tastes in and access to music, a matter of some interest. Starting from diagrams, drawings, maps of the domestic, it would be possible to move into questions of gender and age relations, of tactics of 'unification' and separation (cf. Silverstone, 1994; Silverstone and Hirsch, 1992; Moores, 1993). These could be complemented by getting students to chart both sibling relations and friendship networks, building a knowledge of the flows of musical interest and taste on that basis. There is scope here as well to encourage some investigation of, and reflection upon, habits of collection and use in relation to tapes and CDs and records (cf. Harvey, 1989; Middleton and Edwards, 1990) and to locate these in a broader discussion of tactics of individuation.

In Chapter 4, and elsewhere, I have placed some emphasis on the limitations of current 'talk' about music, and the need for other ways of representing musical experience. Of course, there is a case for a more formally organized conceptual system in the discussion and teaching of music (Green 1988, 1997; McClary, 1991). But for students, or for ourselves as *media* teachers, struggling to engage in talk about music, with those for whom it is an immediate, transient and

everyday medium, these formal vocabularies are very unlikely to offer attractive places to begin. However desirable a language of formal description may be, there is a sense in which music is always already replete with social meanings and these cannot easily be bracketed out. A language of description has to be attentive to the social production of particular music forms (cf. Goodwin, 1993; Frith, 1996) and the diverse meanings produced in their contexts of reception and use. To some extent, *Desert Island Discs,* and other radio talk shows might also provide, as was evident in Chapter 6, productive models for exploring both the social currency, and the more individuated features, of musical experience. Despite my reservations about always anchoring classroom practice in the production of writing, it may also be essential to make available writing which represents music's social currency, and which may be journalistic or fictional, rather than more formally analytical. Collecting varieties of writing about socially embedded musical experience ought therefore to be a priority for media teachers.[3] Indeed, such a concern with the delineated meanings of music (Green, 1988) should be one of the strengths of Media Studies if, also, some effort to further develop ways of analysing 'inherent' meanings are also necessary (see Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994).

It may be that writing which invites laughter, like *High Fidelity* (Hornby, 1995), could facilitate talk about pop music. In classrooms, such talk can too easily be stifled by gravity. The 'seriousness' of teachers, a feature of my own self-presentation in the discussions analyzed in Appendix 1 and Chapter 4, is not likely to be helpful. Moreover, such 'seriousness' is often compounded by the students' attribution of exclusively 'classical' tastes to teachers (see Green, 1997: pp.145-47). This may be an intractable example of 'othering', but teachers might usefully work towards some common acknowledgement of this dynamic between themselves and their students.

A rather different, and more ambitious, proposal is that networks between media teachers in a variety of schools should be used to enable the exchange and circulation of their students' various writings around popular music. It would have been valuable, for example, for the Hackney and the Edmonton groups to read, and situate, each other's comments - and for other groups, similarly differentiated, to do so. The writing discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 or other comparable pieces in which students represented their current, and past, experiences of popular music, could well be used to open up a sense of contrast and dialogue between differently located students. Broad questions around the social differentiation of tastes and of music audiences might

thus emerge in terms of the particular evidence provided by the students themselves. Moreover, in transforming such 'research data' into teaching materials, it would be productive to also make available the comparison which has introduced this thesis - those passages, and some of the students' own words, from Frith's Keighley survey (Frith, 1983). In this respect, studying the social differentiation of audiences would be given a more concrete and exploratory turn. But such a practice of exchange might also further the effort to enable students to understand how their own self-accounts are constructed, in part, through the discourses of the self which teenage magazines and popular music make available.

I have wanted to draw attention to the language in which subjects position themselves, but I also want such attention to be encouraged among the students themselves. Hey (1997) emphasises:

> ...the crucial importance of language and discourse as constructing 'permissible' places from which to speak. We urgently need to interrogate which forms of discourse create what sort of places and how these positions encode cultural and social powers for their speakers and forms of powerlessness for those silenced. (Hey, 1997: p.137)

From the standpoint I have adopted, the 'we' in this should include the students themselves. The students' own learning about the social forms in which subjectivity is articulated is a possible outcome of a reciprocal working practice in

which teachers could exchange students' productions rather than only ever return them to the producers themselves, within the constraints of a single classroom. Of course, such proposals may seem more plausible to teachers in highly academic schools like that in Edmonton and, as I have indicated, there would be serious questions to pose about how reciprocal such exchanges might be and where the evidence of significant learning would be judged to have occurred. But, just because my own research has produced a strong contrast between only two, very differently located, schools I would not want to turn away from implementing this development in practice, across a variety of institutions.

However, there are further difficulties associated with attempts to socially situate and historicize the immediate cultural experience of young people. Doing the 'history' of popular music, for example, might tend to reaffirm that school knowledge, and the knowledge teachers feel comfortable with, is necessarily at some distance from the currency of music in the 'private and privatized domain' of 'adolescent' life (cf. Archer, 1996).[4] Alison suggested this in her comments (cited in Appendix 1 and Chapter 5), though she was also firm in her advocacy of both strongly historical and institutional versions of 'knowledge about music'. As I have argued, it is through popular music that 'adolescents' claim

some degree of distinctive social and affective space, and a degree of power in and through that space. As Alison herself suggested (see Appendix 1), and as my discussions in Chapter 4 confirmed, they did not want to be positioned by others, to be explained as members of marketing categories (cf. Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995). Unfortunately, a critical discourse representing every choice in popular music as manipulated and determined, or as coming out of a history about which the teacher knows (or claims to) and the class does not, looks likely to reinstate those problems reviewed in Chapter 1 (see, for example, Bethell, 1975). Given the inadequacies of a 'rationalist' pedagogy, should media teachers forget history, drop efforts to teach about the 'industry' and to otherwise socially situate aspects of immediate 'lived' experience?

In teaching about pop music, there is necessarily a struggle to achieve several purposes simultaneously. To the extent that media teaching does engage with pop music, it is likely to favour historical and institutional perspectives. In general, such an emphasis should be an integral element in the development of a *social* self-understanding. But such teaching has to work with the kind of assertive self-positionings reported in my research. It is not surprising then that the emphasis given to forms of production in recent innovations in Media Studies explicitly recognises the need

to enable young people to use their own cultural experience in engaging with processes structured and supported by teachers (see Buckingham, Grahame and Sefton-Green, 1995).

However, I want to argue, additionally, that to keep alive the sense of immediate, and emotive, microcultural meanings in dialogues around music may also depend on teachers being painfully explicit about their own musical knowledge, history and 'taste'.[5] In autobiographical mode, I might well want to talk about *buying*, at 15, Memphis Slim and John Lee Hooker LPs, while listening to (but not buying) Motown and soul on pirate radio. What did this mean in the youth cultural divisions of 1967? What consequences did it have? Why did I subsequently sell both LPs, only to replace them years later? Why did I let my brother take my copy of *Blues Breakers* (John Mayall) when he left home? Why didn't I go to see Jimi Hendrix in Hull when I had the chance? There is no need to answer these questions here but, just to make it clear that the issues are not just idiosyncratic and personal (which of course they are), I can explain that, in 1967, Memphis Slim, rather than Motown, meant choosing folk authenticity against commercial debasement. Beginning to collect old blues records, starting an archive, must have seemed a better 'investment' than a party stained Motown (dance) compilation.

Of course buying Memphis Slim was also a (gendered) act, privileging the 'masculinity' of blues against the

'effeminacy' of Motown and its (mod) followers. It didn't work. The superiority of my record collection seemed meaningless to the girl I was trying to impress.[6] Of course, as I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, I need to reiterate that the place for teacher's autobiographical accounts is by no means secure. As I noted in Chapter 6, it was much easier for the teachers in Edmonton to introduce aspects of their own 'adolescent' experience than it may have been in Hackney, where younger students, in a more working-class milieu, might well use 'personal' information as a means to embarrass teachers perceived to be always already middle-class. Autobiographical presentations by teachers cannot guarantee any necessarily productive reconfiguration of the institutional relations between teacher and taught. Judgements about tactics of this kind must depend very much on particular circumstances, but it is important that teachers attempt to locate themselves as participants in the practices they expect students to enact.[7]

The need to go beyond the 'closure' of teachers' professional identities, if especially apparent in teaching about pop music, has been an interesting and troublesome element in media teaching for many years. In moving out of the apparent security, and bounded discipline, of English and into Media Studies, who we are, as teachers, and where we are

located culturally, becomes more uncertain, and more open to our students' questions. Moreover, in the recent controversies around the National Curriculum, and in rapidly changing cultural circumstances, that supposedly stable identity - an 'English teacher' - is itself suffering, but also sometimes thriving upon, a protracted crisis in which it is difficult to reclaim singular or pre-defined identities. The advantage of this, in teaching about pop music, is that the need to more directly represent our cultural positions to our students is less the isolated anomaly that it once was. It may be, therefore, that media teachers are now placed with some strategic advantage in a more widely recognized sense of crisis around cultural legitimacy in the school curriculum (see Moss, 1989; Jones, 1992; Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994; Richards, 1996b; Richards, 1997).

Conclusions

The approach to teaching about pop music suggested here is one which takes up a discourse of education as 'change' and 'innovation' (cf. Kress, 1995). However, I want to reiterate that teachers need to put themselves within that discourse, placing themselves along with their students, rather than always and only seeing themselves (ourselves) as the agency of change in others. Moving into a research practice, as a reflective practitioner, may well facilitate precisely such an enhanced sense of change. From my own example, looking

back over the research for this thesis, some of it carried out more than five years ago, I can now recognize that I would act differently in the conduct of the research as a result of what I have learnt in the process. As a teacher-researcher (see Bryant, 1996; Connell, 1993) I would be inclined to risk being much more upfront about my own sense of musical location and the complexities of both long past and continuing experience. In this respect, I would be far less concerned to sustain the conventional self-monitoring appropriate to being a teacher and more prepared to try out forms of dialogue less anxiously bound by the 'rules of objectivity' (see Bourdieu, 1979, cited in Mander 1987; see, also, Hollway, 1994) to which I referred in Chapter 4. Moreover, following my reading of hitherto unfamiliar work in music education (especially Green, 1988; 1997) I would want to make listening to music with students a priority and a focus for further enquiries into informal discourses of musical description. But even without a research commitment, media education, and especially teaching about pop music, can move teachers into a more radically unsettled curricular space than that previously provided by most English teaching. The struggle to conceive of a more flexible practice, attentive to the forms, and the detail, of the emergent and disparate cultures in which school students locate themselves can thus demand innovations which, reflexively, may have

enduring consequences for teachers' professional self-identities.

The effort of teaching, and of sustaining the discursive coherence and credibility of media education, involves teachers in some work on themselves, drawing on experiences of change and possibility in the past, but also necessarily rethinking the more settled features of their own formation as, often initially, teachers of English. To some extent, new forms of teacher identity are achieved in this process.[8] Ken Jones, in a discussion of the 1993 boycott of testing (Jones, 1994: pp.84-110), has argued that those events can be interpreted in terms of a 'social movement' in which new kinds of teacher identity were created. My own view is that, within the larger political context of English teaching, media education has continued to suggest other kinds of practice, both potential and actual. Media education has been a discursive resource for teachers, enabling them to redefine what they might be and might achieve. Of course, this has not just been a peculiarity of the recent past but, as Jones argues:

> ...the categories employed by a collective agent are not all provided for it by the central struggle in which it is involved: agents are formed by their participation - usually, over a number of years - in a multi-discursive, multi-conflictual context. It is this many-sided engagement which supplies agents with the material from which to construct complex and effective discourses. (Jones, 1994: p.101).

As my own autobiographical notes have suggested, the terms of my own engagement with teaching Media Studies can be traced back through a variety of 'multi-discursive, multi-conflictual contexts' over many years. I have indicated how aspects of my experience in 'adolescence', at school, in higher education (especially at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies) and as a teacher, have informed my research and the standpoint from which I conducted it. But I have not approached the present circumstances simply from within fixed 'symbolic moulds' (Willis, 1990) formed in earlier decades. To the contrary, traces of past encounters in a variety of educational (and some non-educational) contexts have been revived and rearticulated through a continuing effort to sustain some sense of a worthwhile social purpose in educational practice, in a period dominated by the oppressive and demoralising educational policies of the last Conservative government of the century (see Hatcher and Jones, 1996). It is important, therefore, to stress that, even in the midst of the more urgent conduct of the 1993 boycott, the *effort* of making media education more attentive to the forms of popular culture it has tended to neglect - pop music in this case - was also a kind of struggle against the strictures of Conservative educational policy.

My argument, in this thesis, is that popular music has been neglected by media education and that despite the real

difficulties which may account for that neglect, there should be a wider effort to explore ways of working with students in this field. There is the potential in studying pop music to examine the negotiation of microcultural meanings through both adult and adolescent tastes in music. To do so involves an uneasy recognition that, in Media Studies classrooms, people with very different biographies are brought together in institutionally framed exchanges where aspects of informal experience, often constructed as personal and emotive, are pulled into view. However, in such encounters, often marked by divergent class and generational experiences, it should not be just the students whose informal worlds are opened up for discussion. Teachers, as I have suggested, need to place themselves in exchanges where they too are called upon to articulate and review the complexity of their involvement with the field of popular music. This should entail a movement beyond the more bounded forms of identity within the 'professional' domain of English teaching, in which Media Studies has been anchored. Thus, the question of what kind of teacher to be - and of what kinds of knowledge to recognize and develop in dialogues with students - remains a problematic but vitally important issue in the development of media education.

Notes

1. For example, beyond the constraints of my own research, the Head of Media Studies in Edmonton had contrived an arrangement which made it possible to redefine a classroom space in terms of a working television studio. The physical and technical organization of the space made possible the effort to enact, and improvise around, positions in working relationships which, concomitantly, demanded of everyone some degree of 're-location' within a discourse otherwise unspoken in the classroom context. Forms of production involving the selection and representation (sampling and mixing) of recorded music would provide a similar basis for a discursive reconstruction of the classroom context.

2. It would have been interesting to have the opportunity to return to the Hackney school to try out a version of the *Desert Island Discs* project with their GCSE students. However, as I have noted in Chapter 6, by 1995 they had reduced the number of Media Studies groups and Richard was no longer teaching Media Studies.

3. Steve Archer, critically reviewing his own efforts, suggests that he devoted too little time to '...helping them to develop an adequate language to express their individual concerns. My biggest mistake was in largely ignoring the wealth of pop writing styles that already exist in magazines such as *Smash Hits* and *Melody Maker...*' (Archer, 1996: p.44).

4. 'Pupils seemed to have little knowledge of pop history, and indeed regarded all the extracts of music I played to them as just that...examples of history. The use of the term 'history' in this case implies their disapproval that a supposedly pleasurable subject was centred on texts that had no relevance or interest for them.

As far as the Year 11 class were concerned, they were fans of a particularly new music, and much of their identity was defined in comparison with other, *debased* forms. This debasement focused on the music that adults such as myself were characterised as appreciating. I felt that music was a vital thing for them, the very substance of their identity was built on it, especially the jungle fans, one of whom would only listen to a particular 'pure' form...The fact is that music from the past - even the recent past - cannot reproduce the quality of sound and sheer volume and speed of composition that both jungle and hardcore can summon up. Perhaps it comes back to the nature of sound textures; youth *specifically* can still be addressed by the substance of noise, a substance that proclaims itself to be new, exciting and for them.' (Archer, 1996: p.42)

5. Archer ends his article with this: 'If I can have the courage to admit to my interests in music at the beginning of the unit of work, then perhaps a more open and flexible attitude to learning about music will develop. By exposing my own fandom, by making what I like and value explicit, I can provide an immediate model for a discourse about music. All these challenges face me the next time I teach pop music. I look forward once again to the chance to encourage a meaningful fusion of fan creativity and critical value...the evolution of a stringent pop music criticism in the classroom.' (Archer, 1966: p.44)

6. There are writers whose fictional handling of these issues could usefully complement accounts worked up by teachers and by students. Nick Hornby's (1995) novel, *High Fidelity* would be a good place to look. Questions of gender and sexuality, variously explored by the students in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, are well interwoven with matters of musical taste throughout Hornby's narrative.

7. One of the Edmonton media teachers did exactly this: she too wrote an autobiographical piece about her past engagements with music.

8. However, see Bernstein (1973), 'On the classification and framing of educational knowledge', for a seminal essay which mixes advocacy and warning: '...deep-felt resistances are called out by the issue of change in educational codes' (p.249).

Appendix 1: 'Knowledge about music' - A 'Pilot' Study - June-July 1992

This appendix presents an early and problematic phase of my research. In effect, it attempts to combine two different, and not mutually compatible, purposes. To some extent I attempt to use the data here as sociological evidence about youth. At the same time I draw attention to the contingent and situated nature of the data. But there is not enough data, or not enough data gathered in an appropriate variety of settings, to secure the arguments I attempt to make about youth. Furthermore, the emphasis I place on the very particular and institutionally peculiar circumstances of my data collection tends to undermine the use of such data for the wider sociological arguments I rehearse. What I learnt from this was that I could not build the wider sociological argument about youth by doing research in this way. I would either have to do more and more diverse kinds of data gathering or I would have to focus my concerns more precisely within the institutional encounter between teacher and taught. I thus decided to relinquish my loosely formulated ethnographic ambitions and chose to focus upon teaching popular music within the formal domain, in institutional encounters between teachers (including myself) and students.

Introduction

The data discussed in this appendix are derived from a brief pilot study involving only four students in the Hackney comprehensive. The students involved were 'given' to me by their teacher, Richard. They seemed willing, and were perhaps flattered, to be chosen to talk to me away from their Media Studies lesson. I did not choose the students myself according to some predetermined plan. On the contrary, I depended upon Richard's pre-existing relationship with the class and upon his knowledge of the students. Though I had my own rationale for this initial enquiry, the research took shape through a negotiated collaboration with their teacher. These students were selected as perhaps more interested than others (among those present on that particular day) in the questions I wanted to ask - more likely, then, to offer 'knowledge about music'.

At the beginning of my first group interview with the students, I explained that I wanted to develop the role of popular music in Media Studies. I was thus offering an educationally bounded legitimation of my enquiry and one which, as students of GCSE Media Studies, they might accept as inviting them to be plausible and experienced respondents. I certainly wanted to defer any intrusion beyond their

'school identities'. I did not, for example, suggest that I might be interested in them because they were students from a working-class area or because they were an ethnically mixed group. My intentions thus involved a more narrowly defined address to their contextually specific, institutional, identities. But the discussion, and three individual interviews, didn't 'flow' easily. They did not offer 'knowledge about music' in the terms that, perhaps, I expected.

The group

The group discussion took place in July 1992. The four students were Alan, a white boy; Stephen, an African-Caribbean boy; Asiye, a bilingual (Turkish/English) girl, and Margaret, a white girl from an Irish family background. Margaret spoke a great deal, the boys in response to my questions, and Asiye very little.

The discussion was an attempt to draw out accounts of how music is implicated in their everyday lives and was especially directed towards the domestic contexts of their use of music. Following the recent upsurge in research concerned with the domestic contexts of television viewing (see Morley, 1992) and inclined to see this as a promising area for media teaching, I wanted to open up this context for discussion in the classroom. But, eventually, I realized that this was a domain of experience which would require other kinds of research enquiry, quite different from those I subsequently pursued.

Stephen was quick to answer from the beginning, if not interested in developing responses at length. In this context he seemed able to establish some degree of credibility to which others might defer. Certainly Margaret, despite her own confidence in speaking, seemed at times to turn to Stephen for affirmation or clarification of a point she wished to make. But the first part of the interview was dominated by a dialogue between myself and Stephen, a dialogue into which Margaret and Alan entered though not in any sustained way. It is not so much that Stephen kept them out but that, having successfully drawn my attention to his knowledge of black pirate radio, I colluded with him in giving time to a topic to which the others found it difficult to contribute. The discussion thus appeared as one anchored somewhat by this first relatively prolonged exchange and the opportunity it gave Stephen to present himself as a credible and serious respondent.

At various points my dialogue with Stephen faltered. I found it difficult to know what kinds of questions to ask and repeatedly found my own bookish knowledge of popular music an

inadequate resource on which to draw. In those first weeks of the research, I didn't have the familiarity with current popular music to improvise in conversation with the students I talked to. I felt ill-at-ease, floundering in a cultural world to which the published works of Dick Hebdige (1987), David Toop (1984) or Simon Jones (1988) provided no reliable guide.[1] For the students, it may not have been surprising that I knew so little, but my confidence declined as the discussion unfolded and the extent of my own ignorance became apparent. But perhaps even Stephen knew less than his self-assured manner suggested and we were thus both, perhaps all, warily avoiding the admission that we did not always know quite what we were talking about.

CR: What's Station FM?

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[1] Compare Richard's comments from my March 1994 interview with him: 'I think what fascinated me was the sources of their knowledge...I mean we think that there's something they should know more about, the history for example and so on. But it's actually where they got their knowledge of it from and I find all that very strange...there were some things you would hear at raves so called or that, just from the radio or buying things and it didn't, it seemed to reflect different types of music as well; that you would listen to certain types of music on the radio whereas you would buy or borrow, you know, other kinds of music from your friends...

...I think I said jokingly too that I kept wanting to go to Vortex but hadn't been, this jazz club...I wasn't quite sure what to wear and that was a facetious remark...but that seemed actually to be (laughter) connected for them...that these were particular roles you took on and so on...

...I've always been very poor personally at learning and being able to kind of talk in a fluent and coherent manner about things which I have learnt impressionistically and from my own experience, I think I have got an academic mind, not in terms of cleverness, but in terms of my approach...I find it much easier to absorb something if I read a book and read about it from preface to index than actually kind of absorb it from living it and I'm fascinated that these children are able to do it so well and one of my brothers is very good at that...he can kind of give you a history of, you know, rock 'n' roll or something, which I'm completely unable to do, simply because he's listened to records not because he's read books about it, whereas I would be able to if I read about it, I think that...a dry and dusty way of experiencing the world...(laughter).'

Stephen: It plays soul, reggae...it's a pirate station...
CR: And it's just in this area...so if you're living in west London you probably couldn't pick it up...Could I pick it up, where would I find it on the dial?
Stephen:...just know where...
CR: You just know where...and do you know exactly where it's broadcast from, roughly well 'round here, any ideas?
Stephen: Stoke Newington...'round Dalston I think
CR: ...'round Dalston...and is it on what, 24 hours a day or less?
Stephen: If they don't get caught yeah...
CR: How often do they get caught?
Stephen: I don't know...they had a station before but they got done...
CR: So what're they doing, transmitting from a building somewhere...from the top...And what do they play?
Stephen: Reggae, soul, rap, ragga
CR: And is it stuff that's new to you or is it all very familiar?
Stephen: It's familiar
CR: But do they sort of import stuff and play stuff you've never heard before?
Stephen: A bit
CR:...probably can't get it where I live, I live in Haringey...do you have your own radio, do you listen to that alone at home...
Stephen: (inaudible response)
CR: And if you want to get the records they play...where do you to get them?
Stephen:...yeah...down Ridley...
CR: What, in the market?
Stephen:...sometimes Our Price but not a lot
CR: Do they actually advertise the shops? By name...they don't do any advertising at all...so they're not making any money like in that way...so they never mention shops, they don't tell you where to get things...
Stephen:...some yeah but on occasions they do, but not much 'cause they wanna keep it to themselves...where they get it from to themselves
CR: So I mean what's new in reggae...does new reggae come from this country or from Jamaica?
Stephen: Jamaica
CR: Really? So what's new from there then?
Stephen: (inaudible response)
CR: I don't know any recent reggae from Jamaica at all...I really don't...I know stuff that's very old, from years ago...I saw a poster the other day for Burning Spear...doing something on the 10th I

think, I don't know where, I saw this poster in Finsbury Park but I wouldn't know of any new names at all... (turning to Margaret)...What was the station you mentioned?

Stephen's inaudible mumble at the end of this exchange and my own final, unsuccessful, struggle to connect the past with the present ('I saw a poster the other day for Burning Spear') illustrate just how my desire to be given 'knowledge about music' was, in this context, frustrated.

A comparable exchange occurred much later in the interview. Again, it is essential to have quite an extended extract from the transcript:

CR: What's the difference between ragga and reggae?
Stephen: The other one's got...just a faster beat
CR: What, ragga's faster?
Stephen:...yeah...in reggae...more singing
Margaret: Reggae's more slow
Stephen:...slow
Margaret: Ragga's more fast, faster...you can dance to it
CR: I mean I suppose the kind of reggae I know is pretty old stuff like there's obviously all of Bob Marley's stuff but I mean...what else?
CR: I like Bob Marley
CR: Reggae seems to me to cover a lot of different things that's all, it's a name that people use for sort of ska and lover's rock and all sorts of stuff
Stephen: Yeah, lover's rock
CR: So when you say reggae, you're including those yeah?
Stephen: I don't think ska is reggae though...
CR: You don't think ska is reggae, no?
Stephen: I think it's just an old kind of acid...it doesn't sound like reggae...
Margaret: What's that?
Stephen: Ska
CR: What about rocksteady? Do you know about that? I mean they're really difficult to separate out one from another, it's just that in the 60s and early 70s people used to talk about different things and I mean here people used to talk about Blue Beat just 'cause it was the name of a record label...so reggae means generally what...give me some names
Stephen: Peter Tosh
CR: I mean Peter Tosh used to be with the Wailers ages ago, yeah
Stephen: John Holt...C(inaudible)...I can't think of any more...
CR Is there any connection between that kind of music and rap? Or are they completely separate?

Stephen: Between what?
CR: Between reggae and rap?
Stephen: (inaudible response)
CR: There isn't at all?
Stephen: Not much no...maybe a little but not a lot...in rap sometimes they use a little reggae as a beat

In this, by locating Peter Tosh as both already familiar to me and as belonging to the distant past, I indicated that Peter Tosh didn't count as the 'knowledge' I wanted to elicit. To give me any names at all may have been just a necessary concession, stuck with an adult visitor with several minutes of lesson time still to go. On the other hand, as I asked about 'reggae', I got precisely the 'old' information elicited by such a backward looking generic category! And perhaps he offered no more because, speaking as an 'adolescent' to a teacher, to become a more expansive informant would have entailed giving up the distance from within which he could control, and frustrate, my efforts to know 'adolescent' cultures. Indeed, on another occasion he brought in a ragga tape for me to listen to and was undoubtedly pleased when I admitted that I couldn't understand it.

However, without in any way contradicting these possibilities, it is also plausible to argue that coexisting with quite a sparse knowledge of the detailed contents of genres, was a strong cultural claim upon black music as a public marker of his identity. For Stephen, a sense of participation in Afro-Caribbean and African-American music perhaps enabled him to speak from a position which, in the field of popular music, has a substantial and distinctive power (cf. Hewitt, 1986: p.26; p.94). Thus, though he indicated knowledge of other music, it is to black traditions that he returned and to which he seemed committed. Such self-positioning in a black Atlantic culture was achieved without needing to constitute his experience as 'knowledge'.

He combined reference to a pirate station in the immediate area, the Stoke Newington and Dalston districts of Hackney, with reference to a range of black music establishing a connection with Jamaica and North America. The local area of Hackney and the pirate 'Station FM' emerged as 'nodes' within a network of relations between black musical cultures, crossing national boundaries. Such cultures, however sharply differentiated one from another, are nevertheless allied to each other by their implicit separation from the white musical cultures of the nations in which they are located. There is a larger argument to pursue here, an argument in which the significance of 'Station FM' for Stephen can be

connected with a perspective outlined by the economic geographer Doreen Massey:

> Instead...of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent. (Massey, 1991).

Some of the students I talked to were well placed to grasp global relations in these terms, not least because of their particular familial histories. Following Massey, I want to stress that the meaning of Stoke Newington and Dalston as places, though delimited perhaps by the transmission range of 'Station FM', cannot nevertheless be contained within what are accepted as the usual, commonsense, definitions of the 'local' or, even, the 'East End' (see Gilroy, 1993; Hannerz, 1992; Hall, in Hall et al, 1992). Stephen's relation with the place is both mediated through the pirate station and informed by the particularity of his involvement in a history of black migration and settlement. But a white student, such as Margaret, could also participate in this understanding of place, partly through an interest in black music, but also through her own location in another history of migrations. For example, she referred to family connections with Ireland and Nova Scotia and these figured in her domestic experience of music. Indeed, in later discussions with other Hackney students and in the writing produced by students in Edmonton, it became apparent that pop music is a medium through which individual subjects often, though certainly not always, (re)position themselves in geographically wide-ranging cultural networks (see Jones, 1988; and Frith, in Grossberg et al, 1992).

'Station FM' was, additionally, characterized by Stephen as relating to its audience through a somewhat contradictory strategy: though it makes available 'reggae, soul, rap, ragga', it does so without informing the audience of their sources - 'they wanna keep it to themselves...where they get it from to themselves'. It may be that the 'otherness' of 'Station FM' is also implicit in this lack of involvement in advertising, in its apparent distance from the practice of addressing the radio audience as paying consumers of music. To some extent it seemed important for Stephen to produce an account of the station as a pirate operator, taking risks, carrying no advertising, somewhat obscure, clandestine and unpredictable and thus the 'other' to the mainstream commercial music station 'Capital', for example (cf. Thornton, 1995: p.147). Stephen thus placed himself as having

particular access to an 'arcane' domain; in the recent history of 'local' radio in Britain pirate stations have been primarily a black concern. Thus, his barely audible mumbles and meagre references, whatever the lack of knowledge they may have concealed, could have actually enhanced the power of his claim to a *culturally* distinctive presence in the group. He could be seen as doing just like the black pirate *djs*: 'keep[ing] it to themselves'.

A further dimension of Stephen's tactical claim to cultural prestige requires some consideration here. Though none of the students ever makes any explicit claim in terms of a distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity, there are implicit tactics of differentiation in their utterances which can be read as drawing upon a variety of discourses in which the logic of that distinction is evident (see Middleton, 1990; Redhead, 1990; Goodwin, 1993). For example, black music is set against the music of *Top of the Pops,* the BBC TV chart show originating in the mid-1960s. Stephen seemed to watch with the expectation that something other than 'pop' might appear - rap was his example (cf. Cubitt, in Masterman, 1984):

> CR: Do you all watch *Top of the Pops*?
> Stephen: I do sometimes...if there's something good on but, but *Top of the Pops*, I don't like most of the music on there...if it's got rap or something like that, you know, I watch it...
> Margaret: yeah...*The Chart Show*...
> CR: Do they ever have rap on *Top of the Pops*?
> Stephen: Only sometimes...only once every...they only...the only thing that comes up is like Omar, stuff like that...
> CR: I'm trying to think what other music programmes there are...Do...did you ever watch Rapido? (mild derision)...they did stuff on rap occasionally
> Stephen: Yeah I saw
> Margaret: I like *The Chart Show*, I like watching it

There were no overt challenges to the status of black music in this discussion and Margaret, in particular, repeatedly and with some reciprocation, affirmed Stephen's view, if also introducing another programme against which to (dis) authenticate *Top of the Pops*. Analytically, 'authenticity' provides a provisional means to compare otherwise apparently unrelated tactics in the comments made by Margaret and by Alan, both in the group and, more fully, in the individual interviews which followed. In Stephen's account black music had a prestige apparently implicit in its constituent genres themselves, rather than, on the whole, in any strong subdivision among its exponents.

Though I have referred to this discussion as 'the group interview', they only constituted themselves as a group[2] at particular moments and, most evidently, by taking a common distance from whatever they regarded as laughable or 'boring' in popular music. In particular, *Top of the Pops* seemed a kind of 'stock item' in a repertoire of objects against which they could position themselves. It, perhaps, had a particularly enduring place among the more ephemeral resources on which they could draw in positioning themselves as 'adolescent':

> Margaret: On TV they end up playing what they wanna hear like on *Top of the Pops*, they don't play...people, they play things like what they want us, what they want people to like...
> Alan: That's what they want, it's not what we want
> Margaret: yeah
> Stephen: Yeah it's true
> Margaret:...try like to make us like it but no one likes it...
> CR:...yeah but isn't it already on *Top of the Pops* because it's sold I don't know x number of copies?
> Margaret: Yeah but *Top of the Pops* is trying to be for people our age and people older but people our age and older just don't like that sort of music really...
> CR: So how old...
> Margaret: The majority of people...it's normally younger kids who listen to that sort of music...
> CR: So what age of people do you think watch *Top of the Pops*...7, 8? What do you think?
> Stephen: I watch it
> Stephen/Margaret: Everyone watches it...

This repeats the motifs of a familiar discourse in which the BBC, in particular, is charged with misaddressing young people, usually with some combination of moralistic and aesthetically prescriptive intent. Here, it is tactically necessary to be misaddressed by a more inclusive, adult, 'they' against which an adolescent 'we' can enjoy being misunderstood, mistargeted as 'they', year after year, go on getting it wrong. And thus they say they continue to watch, if only to keep alive the context of their difference.

Interestingly, they mocked the programme which, for Masterman more than a decade earlier (Masterman, 1980), was the object of some critical anxiety. It has been a programme dominated by what many regard as the safe middle ground of pop, and particularly by music probably more popular with younger,

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[2] Jordin and Brunt (1988): see especially pp.240-247.

pre-teenage, audiences (see Cubitt, in Masterman, 1984). Furthermore, Thornton (1995) comments, in the context of her account of 'club culture', that *Top of the Pops* 'is seen as the unrivalled nemesis of the underground and the main gateway to mass culture' (Thornton, 1995: p.123). However, for these 15 year olds *as a group*, it was more salient as a means to put some distance between themselves and both childhood and the adult world. But, within the same discussion, they could also constitute themselves as individuals through a further differentiation of their negative relation to the programme. Margaret, for example, in her endorsement of *The Chart Show*, shown on commercial television, was drawing more upon the subcultural discourse identified by Thornton. In the more 'subcultural' logic of discrimination teased out in Thornton's (1995) research, there is an inversion of authenticity which results in video being privileged above 'live' performance. Thus to appear 'live' on *Top of the Pops* is to 'sell out' to an extent to which having the 'video' shown does not, or did not, correspond. Self-positioned as an 'adolescent' group, they watched *Top of the Pops* but claimed to dislike it. They marked their 'individuality' along different axes of escape: pulling out to rap and ragga (Stephen), to video (Margaret) or, in the case of Alan, which I discuss below, to 'musicianship'.

Before I turn to examine their individual accounts in more detail, it is important to consider how else they may have collaborated to constitute themselves as 'adolescent', against childhood, and against myself as an adult and teacher. My questioning was too insistent. I was asking questions which intruded into a domain constructed as more personal, and more peculiar to youth, than, for example, television. Indeed, they spoke of television more easily, as if what programmes they watched could not be read as so revealing of their 'interior' selves. Impatient to provoke some more expansive discussion, I asked:

> CR: But are there any kinds of music you really dislike, any of you, anything you really wouldn't want to listen to?
> Margaret: Sonia...(laughter) I can listen to Kylie, I can listen to it, I can, but I can't...
> Stephen: I can't stand Erasure
> CR: You can't stand what?
> Stephen: Erasure
> CR: Why not?
> Margaret: Pet Shop Boys...I can't stand them...they get on my nerves
> CR: Why, what's wrong with Pet Shop Boys?
> Alan: They're just boring
> CR: Why are they boring?

Margaret/Stephen/Alan: (Overlapping, mutually confirming, condemnations - noted but untranscribable)
Stephen: It's just like the same...it doesn't change
CR: And what about Erasure?
Stephen: That's what I mean, it doesn't change
CR: The same stuff
Margaret: They put me off
Alan: You see them on *Top of the Pops*

Rather than reject whole categories of music as 'boring', they spoke only of named singers and groups, each the object of some derision: Sonia, Kylie, Erasure, Pet Shop Boys. What seemed to matter in this context was to mark out their distance from prominent names still current in the field. Their refusals thus suggested a more precise and immediate self-positioning than that achieved by distancing themselves from Mozart or BBC Radio 2 - examples I had suggested but which had very little pertinence for them. To locate themselves against what might more plausibly be seen by others (adults) as *for them* was evidently more important. But, more than that, it is clear that Sonia and Kylie belong to a (girlish) childhood, Erasure and Pet Shop Boys to a somewhat ironical, adult, and sexually ambiguous, play with and parody of pop music. They're not the least bit explicit about any of this: 'boring', 'the same', 'they put me off'. But in these refusals, they 'confirm' for me, and for each other, their location within 'adolescence' and (hetero)sexuality. On the other hand, by mocking these figures they also succeed in defying the intrusive aspect of my questions. Not liking, or not taking seriously, Sonia, Kylie, Erasure and the Pet Shop Boys, does not involve any significant personal statement: these are (or were) the almost 'stock' figures to be drawn, safely, into their public account of tastes in music.

Three individual interviews

I want to reconsider the speakers already discussed but to examine, more closely, their 'individual' concerns in relation to music. I mean 'individual' here to stand for a rhetorical self-construction which cannot be equated in any simple way with a 'personal' subjectivity. The wider discourses of music journalism (see Redhead, 1990; Thornton, 1995), and of other everyday talk about music, are appropriated into their accounts and thus, though they position themselves 'individually', they do so by means of a particular repertoire of socially available distinctions (see Bakhtin, 1988; 1994).

Alan, for example, explained his liking for Simply Red in the words of a rock discourse dating from the 1960s, distinguishing between rock and pop (Frith, 1983):

> CR:...are you saying then that the kind of music you listen to is hard in the sense that you need to be quite skilled or something like that?
> Alan: I listen to Simply Red...like they use all their own instruments...if you did like rap or acid you just take bits from other records, there's no skill in it at all...
> CR: Does, I mean can you say a bit more about Simply Red then and what you like about Simply Red?
> Alan: It's just sort of what appeals to me...really good...Mick Hucknall writes all the songs, all the music...
> CR: Do the words matter?
> Alan: I think it, with them it does yeah...like they tell us what they're saying...
> CR: And what are they singing about?
> Alan: Mostly it's love and relationships, things like that...
> CR: And...how would you describe the music, what's it most like? I don't just mean the name of another band or something like that but if you had to out it in a category, say what kind of music it is, what would you say? What would you say it'd be?
> Alan:...don't know

Asking for some kind of generic classification virtually brought this interview to a premature end. His emphasis on authorship, musicianship and emotional honesty can be read as antagonistic towards similarity within genres. Certainly, he only named genres to criticize them: '...everyone these days just wants acid and rapping but it don't really appeal to me'. More specifically, he rejected rap, and acid, on the grounds that it is:

> ...just boring...just imitation all the time, the same thing...like they just get bits from other tracks and play it all over again, just mix it all in...it's not hard is it really?...if you did, like rap or acid, you just take bits from other records, there's no skill in it at all.

There was a kind of rock nostalgia here, as if at 15 he was weary of the inauthenticity of 'imitation', the severing of music from musicianship and the alienation of words from their speakers. Apparently, he had no affection for post-punk, post-modern cultural bricolage. His words, spoken here without the presence of Stephen, Margaret and Asiye, sounded like those of an absent parent, reanimated in this instance,

perhaps, as a challenge to the prestige of black music.[3] With Alan, but also with the others, utterances sometimes appear to 'call up' the voices of parents and older siblings, suggesting the continuing tension between various discourses around music. Here 'individual consciousness' is apparently complex and divided.[4]

The fact that Alan had recently bought a CD player had emerged in the group interview. I followed this up with him :

> CR:...if you've got money - what do you spend it on, do records come first, is that important, or do you tend to find other things to spend money on much more easily?
> Alan: No, I've got a Saturday job, that's why
> CR: Yeah well I realize that you must have
> Alan: And I bought a system a couple of months ago from a catalogue so I have to pay that off first...
> CR: Right
> Alan: About £20 goes on that a week...
> CR: How much do you get from your Saturday job?
> Alan: I get thirty-five 'cause I go in there after school as well...(inaudible comment on the proportion committed to necessities)
> CR: Thirty-five per week right
> Alan: And the rest of it's just for me, whatever I want
> CR: And what happens during the holidays, does that job become a full-time job?
> Alan: If I wanted, I can go in there
> CR: What're you doing, what kind of work is it?
> Alan: It's just working in a bakery shop

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[3] Ironically, as Simply Red is substantially preoccupied with reworking aspects of black music.

[4] Bakhtin's notion of an internal struggle between discourses is relevant here: 'The tendency to assimilate other's discourse takes on an even deeper and more basic significance in an individual's ideological becoming, in the most fundamental sense. Another's discourse performs here no longer as information, directions, rules, models and so forth - but strives rather to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior; it performs here as *authoritative discourse*, and an *internally persuasive discourse*.' (Bakhtin, 1988: p.342)

CR: What, where they actually bake stuff or doing deliveries?
Alan: No, it's just doing deliveries
[section omitted]
CR: But I, I'm just trying to work this out...if you're spending twenty quid a week paying back for a system that includes what, cassette, CD...and other things or is it just the CD?
Alan: Just the record player as well
CR: I mean it must matter to you quite a lot to have that though, yes?
Alan: Yes
CR: You know what I mean, 'cause there's plenty of other things you can spend your money on...
Alan: I just wanted a new one 'cause I had one before but it was all tinny and didn't sound right...
CR: Yeah
Alan: So I thought to myself that I might as well buy another one...
CR: What make is it?
Alan: Murphy

Alan was willing to talk about his job and the money that he earns. In the traditional terms of working-class masculinity, he can thus address me from a position which points outside and beyond his current place as a school student and a 15 year old boy. Moreover, generically, this is an easy conversation to have: we can talk together about earning money, what to spend it on, the quality and brand name of the technology it can buy. This is just the common small talk of conversations between men; the topic, and its constituent sub-themes, are secure and confirm the everyday content and limits of a public masculinity. But why should he commit so much, proportionately, to the possession of this Murphy system?

There is a further way of situating this, perhaps puzzling, cultural conservatism. His comments can be located in a wider argument around the culture of post-modernity. The economic geographer David Harvey (1989) offers a perspective which may define the relevant context for Alan's attachment to his new Murphy stereo system and his Simply Red CD:

> Photographs, particular objects (like a piano, a clock, a chair), and events (the playing of a record of a piece of music, the singing of a song) become the focus of a contemplative memory, and hence a generator of a sense of self that lies outside the sensory overloading of consumerist culture and fashion. The home becomes a private

> museum to guard against the ravages of time-space compression. (Harvey, 1989: p.292).

This may sound like a description of the habits of much older people or, conceivably, the supposedly more defensive 'bedroom culture' of girls. But it is important to set aside old 'youth culture' preconceptions of male 'adolescence' as played out on the street and recognize that boys do also live within families (McRobbie, 1980) and appropriate domestic space within them. Alan's self-positioning actually seemed to involve a slightly defensive centring in a domestic technology, and the private experience it allows. Though Alan's 'private museum' has been inaugurated with the recent products of consumer culture, his music is chosen because, in his aesthetic, he can claim that it is least contaminated by the impediments of manufacture, copying and technological contrivance and the Murphy system is at least less 'tinny'. Thus out of consumption, Alan constructs a version of authenticity and the anchoring of the self which an aesthetic of expression supports. In other respects, also, Alan implicitly drew upon 'craft' notions of authenticity in work, thus making a nostalgic claim to a work-identity 'rooted' in traditional skills. As I have suggested he disdained as facile the practices of sampling and mixing, favouring effort and traditional musical skill.

Stephen has already figured in the earlier discussion. Most of what I want to add here underlines the reading of his comments in the context of the group interview. He responded to a general question about the importance of black music to him in these terms:

> It's what, like what I've grown up with, that's why I'm used to it more than the other kids who like pop.....My brother listens to reggae and ragga, the old, the old type reggae 'cause he's a musician as well...he plays music and he's taking it at college...My sister listens to reggae and soul. My two younger sisters listen to reggae and soul as well...like that kind of music as well.

This very firm anchoring of himself and his relation to black music through its place in his *family* experience constructs a kind of historical depth at odds with the perception of musical taste as somewhat uprooted and contingent, as if it is no more than what an individual might happen to choose from what the market makes available. At the same time, his location in black music is double-edged: he invoked the past (elsewhere referring to 1960s soul and Motown for example) but also tended to place himself with what is new and innovative, perhaps here marking himself off from some other, (mainly black?) youth: '...most people're still into hip hop

and stuff...but we listen to ragga.' As I have suggested, Stephen was at ease in setting himself apart from 'pop', but also implied some mobility within the field of black music. Without claiming to be 'a ragga'[5] he could align himself with it as Afro-Caribbean and thus, from one discussion to the next, move in and out of, and beyond, the limits of African-American (black) music. This could be compared to the 'classless autonomy of "hip" youth' (Thornton, 1995: p.101) and, as I will suggest, this was also a feature of Margaret's self-account.

Margaret presented her involvement with music in quite a variety of ways. In fact, she sometimes seemed to contradict herself but, in marked contrast with Alan and to a greater extent than Stephen, was perhaps significantly more interested in representing herself as able to engage with a music on several levels. In the group interview, in addition to those contributions already discussed, she presented a possibly exaggerated, perhaps self-mockingly 'typical', account of her everyday use of music:

> I listen to anything...I listen to rock, classical, anything...if I'm driving a car, well I don't drive, but if I'm going in a car...without music...and like my personal stereo...I don't like walking places without listening to music, any music...if I'm going on a long walk.....Put it on [speaking of music radio] leave it on all day...leave it on...can't be bothered to get out of bed...wake up to it...go to school, it's still on, come home it's still on, go to bed, it's still on...on for about three weeks until my mum says 'Turn it off!'

In part, Margaret is doing 'being interviewed' and putting herself in an imaginary position of (adult) control: 'if I'm driving a car' - though, at 15, she doesn't drive! Despite the self-correction, the construction of autonomy persists. Her self-descriptions suggested a mode of life in which musical sound saturates almost all her time not in school. In her account, the particular identity of the music seemed subordinate to a continuity of sound which moves with her, moulding her perceptions of time and distance, her moods and her relation to school work. Indeed, in the group discussion she commented that:

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[5] Stephen commented that raggas have 'roll up trousers, baggy, too baggy...expensive trainers...a lot have caps...and sometimes they do some stupid stuff like they cut up their trousers'.

> When I'm doing my homework I always listen to acid...it makes me work...[CR: Why's that?] I dunno it just does and it makes me laugh as well when they can't get it together, you know they're all moaning on about you know they can't get it together and I'm sitting there doing my homework and they can't get it together.

Though developing a detailed account of Margaret's integration of music into her everyday being-in-the-world was not my aim, it is of some importance to at least suggest its significance. It's useful, again, to turn to the geographical metaphors offered by Harvey (1989). There is some basis for representing Margaret's use of music as a matter of control over the physical space through which she moves, music enabling her to carry a sense of place across movement from one space to another and, with some interruption, through the differentiated time phases of the day. Harvey, in a discussion of the 'postmodern' experience of space and time, suggests this:

> Spaces of very different worlds seem to collapse upon each other, much as the world's commodities are assembled in the supermarket and all manner of sub-cultures get juxtaposed in the contemporary city... and all the divergent spaces of the world are assembled nightly as a collage of images upon the television screen. There seem to be two divergent sociological effects of all of this in daily thought and action. The first suggests taking advantage of all of the divergent possibilities.....the opposite reaction...can best be summed up as the search for personal or collective identity, the search for secure moorings in a shifting world. Place-identity, in this collage of superimposed spatial images that implode in upon us, becomes an important issue, because everyone occupies a space of individuation (a body, a room, a home, a shaping community, a nation), and how we individuate ourselves shapes identity. (Harvey, 1989: pp.301-2).

I would not see some combination of these two 'divergent sociological effects' as at all improbable within the daily strategies of any one individual. But it is the second, and the concept of 'place-identity', which is of particular relevance here. Margaret's account located her within the audio-space of the music: the radio at home, a personal stereo wherever she goes. It is thus through the physical presence of music that she appears to construct a 'place-identity' which is as mobile as her own body but, for her, extends beyond such strictly personal boundaries to imbue times and spaces, what is external and other, with the

musical sound in which she locates herself (cf. Du Gay et al, 1997). School regulations interrupt this continuity, enforcing an order of regulated talk and silence, and thus proscribe this fantasy of self-reflecting autonomy. But of course Margaret, and many others, would surreptitiously reconnect themselves to their personal stereos and thus at least attempt to keep their identities in place.

A further dimension of this self-location, and self-encapsulation, through a physical and emotional immersion in music, is evident in Margaret's identification with music as an occasion for dance:

> ...the Inspiral Carpets' concert was good...everyone that was there was sort of my age...jumping around getting excited.
>
> Ragga's more fast, faster...you can dance to it [Speaking of *Do the Right Thing*] ...the girl at the beginning couldn't dance...she had no rhythm...I swear I could've done better.
>
> ...if I'm at a party or a club I want music I can dance to.
>
> There's no point in playing acid if you're not going to dance to it.

Dance is often prominent in the self-presentation of girls (see Frith, 1993; McRobbie, 1991; McRobbie, 1994; Thornton, 1995; Thomas, 1993; Richards, 1995) and, in this case, there was an insistent element of self-assertion in the way that Margaret invoked dance as a crucial intensification of her relation to music. The pleasure of the bodily self is made central but it should be recognised that there is also some degree of self-categorization in age terms and, within her age and gender domain, a measure of competitive vehemence. Thus, though the meanings and forms of dance have been elaborated considerably since Simon Frith wrote *The Sociology of Rock* (1978), it is still well worth noting, however briefly, the tendency of his, widely influential, analysis. Writing of working-class 'girl culture', he argues:

> The problem is to find a husband - hence the significance for girl culture of dancing. In Britain, more young brides, of all classes, still meet their husbands at dances than in any other way; and the most dramatic change in female leisure is the abruptness with which women give up dancing once they are wed. The point...is that if marriage is a girl's career, then her leisure before marriage is her work, is the setting for the start

> of her career, the attraction of a man suitable for marriage. (Frith, 1983: pp.228-9).

Despite the slightly weird anachronism of this passage, it does serve as a warning that dance is by no means a pleasure to be celebrated simply as a 'liberatory moment'. Of course there's a danger of being reductive here, of implying that the essence of dance is a competitive pursuit of success in a heterosexual scenario. My broader argument is, however, that if dance is still, as Margaret appears to suggest, enmeshed in rivalry between girls, dancing is also enjoyed in other ways, and understood to have different meanings, by many participants in its various forms. For Margaret dance is also, clearly, about an enjoyment of her own body and thus overlaps with the narcissistic use of her personal stereo.

Despite the importance attached to music in Margaret's remarks, whenever the question of buying cassettes and CDs was raised with her she was quick to point out that music was available without spending money, money which was reserved for other matters - from food to make-up (cf. Frith 1983; Thornton, 1995). For example, she claimed to be content to listen to other people's music:

> ...I see it as a waste of money anyway, buying music when all you have to do is turn on the radio or tape it off someone else - it's just as good. I listen to my brother's music...I like it and it's played loud but my mum plays Irish music loud, so if it's a choice between that and John's music, I prefer to listen to John's music...I like some Irish music, I like a bit of everything...

Margaret thus made possessing music marginal and made no strong personal claim to any particular genre. However, music appeared in her account as intrinsic to her social world, and to inhere in her relationships with others. It emerged as an element in her negotiation of social distance and proximity: a qualified preference for ragga over Irish music, for example, and for disconnection through use of her personal stereo.

Research into the uses of reading and of television in domestic settings (see Radway, 1984; Morley, 1992) has suggested that relationships with others are partly negotiated through particular styles of consumption; reading novels as a strategy for securing personal time or, to the contrary, watching television with others to reconstitute a sense of familial belonging, are perhaps familiar instances. The variety of modes of listening to music in both domestic and public space are of comparable complexity and importance. The music over which Margaret represented herself as having some control was that of the radio in her room and the

cassettes played in her personal stereo. In her account, neither appeared to intrude significantly on others in the family. By contrast, her brother, John, and her mother, are presented as asserting their music, their taste, even if the source, in John's case, was within his own room. The meaning of particular practices may vary. For example, playing music loudly in a domestic context may oscillate between, or combine, elements of self-presentation and the wish to exclude, or distance, other members of the family. Margaret's elder sister, by contrast, appeared to have no place in the domestic sphere and to be associated with being out: '...I know she goes out, she goes to clubs like the Dome and they play, they play indie.' As I have suggested, there is scope for research centred more in the domestic context and not, as here, based in classroom discussion with school students. Equally, further research could look more closely at sibling relations and friendship networks in the formation of taste. Nevertheless, there was, in the way that Margaret represented her family, a significant outline of her negotiation of identity in her relationship-through-music-to-others. Margaret's comments suggested a complicated interface between musical cultures, inflected by class and gender, within a single household.

In the individual interview, I was eager to hear of some more definite attachment to a particular music, despite her reluctance to be identified with any one genre. She responded in this way:

> Well, I'm attached to popular music, when I say popular music, I don't mean like classical music, that's alright, when I'm in the mood it relaxes me...when I say popular music, I dunno, songs that make you, I dunno, cry or something, something nice, popular music that you can sing along to and get into but that can be, that can be by anyone, that can be by Madonna or Dire Straits or anyone...
> CR: So you like songs...
> Margaret: Mm, I like songs, I like songs that I can sing along to when I'm at home, or with just a few people...but if I'm at a party or a club I want music I can dance to...
> CR: Right, right...but I mean if you're listening to songs I mean does it matter what they're about?
> Margaret: Yeah, if I'm listening to them it does...if it's songs like 'yeah I'm gonna go nigger bashing' I'm not gonna like it even if it does sound good...
> CR: What kind of songs are like that?
> Margaret: Oh I dunno, anything like, I dunno, if there is a song like that then I don't think I would like it
> CR: Right

> Margaret: Yeah it has to have lyrical content, I don't just like the music, I like the words...

The emphasis on the emotional quality of the music, on a participatory response, and the sense of intimacy it might provide can be compared with accounts given by girls in Chapter 6. Both bring into play a popular motif of 'responsive emotionality' (cf. Shepherd, with Giles-Davis, 1991). But, in this educational setting, it is important to note that her responses constitute her as a 'moral self', competent to discriminate among and within risky cultural products - even if there is some equivocation in the suggestion that she may listen without listening to the words: '*If* I'm listening to them it does...'. The implicit criteria here seem derived from a view of words, certainly as emotionally expressive, but also as carrying the burden of moral integrity in a medium where musical sound can be a source of excitement and of pleasure but might otherwise be without moral value.[6] Alan tended to locate his version of this in authorship, but Margaret was perhaps more careful to leave the matter of differentiation more open: so that, in effect, her choices could be construed as demonstrating her own individual moral and aesthetic responsibility. Indeed, in this respect, Margaret was well positioned to enter the continuing discourse of moral discrimination towards which English, and some versions of Media Studies, have aspired (see Chapter 1). And, though transposed from the religious to the secular discourse of English, the desired state of 'critical discrimination' still carries connotations of spiritual 'ascent' (see Eagleton, 1983).

Margaret was the most adept in combining self-positioning as both a moral, educated self with an autonomy from any particular musical culture or associated youth cultural category. She spoke easily of immediate others in terms of social and cultural categories:[7] her brother had always been

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[6] Susan McClary comments: 'The political folksong is the Left's version of the Calvinist hymn: words foregrounded to control "the meaning", music effaced to the status of vehicle, all untoward appeals to the body eliminated.' (McClary in Ross and Rose, 1994: p.31).

[7] In Hey's (1997) study working-class girls did not employ an explicit language of class. Here, Margaret is closer to the middle-class girls also discussed by Hey: '...Suzy becomes her own semiotician, decoding how 'they' located her image in the classic terms of a subcultural commentary...The conceptual language of class was a structured absence from the lives of working-class girls. The nearest they came to class discourse was in the submerged forms: "snobs", "boffins" and "swots". The all-stars conversely produced themselves through professing classed taste and classed understandings.' (p.118)

a 'ragga' and was 'working-class' (if also a student at Sussex University); her sister was assigned to the category 'middle-class'; and yet, of herself, she said:

> I ain't one or the other really...I'm not anything really...I dunno, most people are probably like me...most people are probably more like me than one or the other, they'll listen to anything and they'll do anything, they can't be classified...I can be friends with anyone, don't matter...whatever you turn on the radio you can get into it...

Here, her 'autonomy' is carefully defended, not least by claiming almost to represent 'most people' and through that displacement into the third person, 'they'll listen...', 'they can't..', reasserting her own eclectic mobility. It is striking that here she speaks in more strongly working class idioms than on other occasions within the same interview - 'I ain't... I dunno...don't matter' - as if assuming a less middle class cultural identity than that deployed elsewhere, notably in her writing (see Chapter 5).[8] However, she does classify both her brother and her sister, thus both drawing upon a discourse of social categorisation and refusing, primarily for herself, the tendency to fix and delimit sub-cultural styles characteristic of both popular and academic discourses around youth. This tendency to refuse self-categorisation has been carefully analyzed by Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) and, though they somewhat neglect the

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[8] Richard commented, in the March 1994 interview: 'I think much more interesting than the actual content is the process of learning and of making sense of it and indeed of, I mean from a kind of, even from your more academic point of view, of actually what constitutes a field of knowledge because in a way we were artificially saying it was music because they were, it had to do with dress styles, it had to do with language, the words they use to speak about it and it, I mean Margaret, for example, is basically a speaker of standard English but she would then sort of switch into a slightly self-conscious, well not self-conscious, a kind of deliberate use of non-standard forms in talking about music, you know, so there was the dress, there was the sense of cultural identity, the alternativeness of the culture, the references to booze and drugs and so on and I think that would be interesting if you could actually look at how you might recategorize things and what it, this vague process of how you make sense of something constituting it as a kind of distinct domain to be thought about...'

structural features of social contexts, their comments are suggestive of how unstable 'identities' can appear as speakers (identified by their clothing as members of subcultures) shift tactics:

> By examining the subtle procedures through which identities are occasioned, resisted, and negotiated in interaction we begin to appreciate social identities as utterly fluid, variable and context-specific. This is partly because the very meaning, content and form of identities are made contextually relevant to address contingent interpersonal concerns. And attending to sequences of talk as forms of social action necessarily engenders a dynamic conception of self and social identity. (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995: p.108)

In my own research, there is comparable evidence of the 'variability' they identify, though within the institutional context of a school classroom where participants enact continuing identities, to describe students' self-identifications as 'utterly fluid' would be a considerable exaggeration. In an earlier study Buckingham (1993) suggests a similar, but more contextually framed, approach:

> What it means to be male or female, working-class or middle-class, black or white, an adult or a child, is not given or predetermined. These 'subject positions' are, at least to some extent, relative terms: they define each other, but their mutual relationships are far from fixed and unchangeable. On the contrary...they can be asserted or disclaimed for different purposes in different social contexts. (Buckingham, 1993: pp.268-9)

In considering my data, to read either 'assertions' or 'disclaimers' as evidence of 'fixed' identities would be misleading. For example, Stephen, like the others, never identified himself in terms of the categories to which he assigned others. Thus, as I have noted, though he said that he listened to ragga he did not claim *to be one* and actually mocked their dress style and spoke of them always as somewhat other to himself. The variety of black music he referenced gave him considerable room for manoeuvre. Alan offered only limited acknowledgment of any connection between music and identity for himself but was able to represent those who listen to acid as drug users. Margaret, in the group interview, most obviously drew on a kind of sociological discourse and thus displayed some confidence in making the connections around which others hesitated:

> Yeah but the thing is music is a very powerful medium...the music someone listens to...it makes them, sort of behave the way they behave...'cause a lot of people who listen to ragga become raggas and become sort of...some of them do, some of them don't...sort of violent and like that and people, a lot of people who listen to like hardcore go out to raves, take loadsa drugs, it just depends, it just depends on what they're into...

The social determinism here, qualified in this setting, though unlikely to be turned back upon herself, is consistent with her unwillingness to be placed too exclusively within one genre. It is as if too much of one genre might transform her into a youth cultural clone, compromising both her moral self-positioning and her indeterminate presence relative to the closure which self-categorisation may imply. In this respect, Margaret is closer to the first of those 'divergent sociological effects' suggested by Harvey: a degree of elusive and easy mutability is presented as an ordinary everyday way of being (see Bourdieu, 1986). In many ways, Margaret's stance seemed often to approximate to that of being 'hip'. If Alan adopted a 'craft' version of musical aesthetics, and Stephen voiced its black variant, Margaret, more than the others, tended towards the 'hip' tactics characterised by Ross (1989):

> To be hip...always involves *outhipping* others with similar claims to make about taste. Hip is the site of a chain reaction of taste, generating minute distinctions which negate and transcend each other at an intuitive rate of fission that is virtually impossible to record. It is entirely inconsistent with the idea of a settled or enduring commitment to a fixed set of choices. (Ross, 1989: p.96)

I do not want to exaggerate this correspondence but Margaret did tend to operate in this way - with perhaps a tacit understanding of how doing so made her appear 'in the know' (cf. Ross, 1989: p.81) and thus able to 'make (cultural) capital' out of her position, whatever her actual knowledge about music (see Chapters 4 and 5).

By contrast, Asiye emerged at the very end of the group session as having a broad interest in pop. She volunteered little more than that she listened to Capital Radio. It was very difficult to elicit much more substantial comment from her though, on a later occasion, she became more involved in a group discussion involving several girls but no boys (see Chapters 4 and 5).

There are a variety of explanations for the emergent pattern of 'indeterminacy' which can be suggested here. First of all, it is fairly clear that the way these 15 year old students

positioned themselves was motivated by a desire to distance themselves from childhood and, further, to locate themselves in the liminality and indeterminacy of 'adolescence', between childhood and the supposedly settled fixity of identities in adult life. To some extent, there is always the possibility of a mixing and blurring of the categories associated with 'race' and ethnicity, class and gender. Indeed, it may be that claims to 'indeterminacy' are themselves tactical - responses to being positioned as 'risky' and 'troublesome' by the regulatory discourse of 'adolescence'. If 'adolescence' is lived by some young people as defiantly indeterminate, this may contribute to some degree of cultural fusion and exchange. There is some evidence of mobility across cultural boundaries in several studies of urban youth, each placing some emphasis on the scope for both cultural hybridity and for movement between ethnically inflected identities (see Jones, 1988; Hebdige, 1987; Hebdige, 1988; Hewitt, 1986). The resources for such cultural mobility are variously located in the particular ethnic composition of some inner city areas, in friendship networks and in the proliferation of popular cultural forms, especially music. However, there is also evidence (see Hewitt, 1986) that beyond the relative indeterminacy of 'adolescence', on entry into adulthood, more bounded identities are established and the social basis of cultural mixing is perhaps only rarely sustained.

I want to re-emphasise that the data discussed in this appendix was collected in a context where school students were being addressed by a kind of teacher. Positioned as 'adolescent', their responses were perhaps wary of censorious judgements, at other times, defiantly assertive. Margaret, and the others, tended to refuse the kind of single essentializing interpellation implied by asking questions with the form of 'What does your liking for music x say about you?'. An interview with a member of Richard's department,[9] conducted in February 1994, included observations which provide further evidence of this, sometimes 'adolescent', refusal:

> ...kids feel uncomfortable about being construed as audiences so when you're sort of teaching genre and marketing and 'how is this music reaching its audience' and you know 'you have been told...sucker, come and spend your money on this because you're black or because you're female or whatever', they feel very uncomfortable about that and they sort of say 'no that's not true I buy it because I like it, it's nothing to do with that' and yet how come you've got your black kids who're only into some kind of sub-sub-culture of American

[9] For the purposes of this thesis I have called her Alison.

> black music that is not distributed by any mainstream, which you would not be able to hear about or even know about unless you knew a black person who could actually tell you about it and where to get it and stuff because it's so sort of minority that it's under under-ground and yet they're saying 'well y'know 'cause I like it, I'm not targeted', you know, it's...how do you teach that sort of thing?

Whatever the wider incidence of such refusals, the positioning of school students as both subject to, and in their non-school lives analytic objects of, the teacher's discourse, compounds the reluctance to move beyond idiosyncratic self-assertion. Here, the students' claims to 'indeterminacy' were, at the very least, tactical evasions both of my power to position them and, in the group context, of the risks of being positioned by their peers. But Margaret, more than the others, also represented herself as a competent and articulate student and, in Chapter 5, I show how this self-positioning was enacted in the production of a written assignment.

It is important to note that this 'indeterminacy' must also be attributed to their specific lack of social and economic power: at 15 they are relatively dependent upon their parents. In the individual interviews all three referred to their mothers buying records or CDs on their behalf: Stephen commented that he would 'ask my mum to buy me...'; Alan, that 'if I like a CD, I'll ask my mum to get it for me like on a Saturday'; and Margaret, 'if I want music really badly and no one else has got it for me to tape off them, if no one else has got it, me mum'll get it for me.' Of course the boys kept their mums out of the group interview and, given such strategies of self-presentation, it is worth recalling earlier tendencies in youth research to collude with participants' claims to a male street culture independent of its domestic anchorage. But, at this age, their lives organized between family and school, they had very limited social and economic power to establish substantially differentiated lifestyles and construct more securely autonomous identities. Their power is more appropriately conceived as semiotic: with meagre material resources they remake their cultural identities in minor ways, constrained financially within patterns of transient consumption. Their quite limited collections of CDs and cassettes, the details of their clothing, of make-up or of jewellery, are 'small things', but with larger meanings anchored in them.

Despite these various reflections on the need to interpret this material with some caution, I do want to reaffirm the relevance of the 'geographical' perspective to an understanding of the cultural tactics of identity. For

example, Harvey's analysis of postmodernity provides a necessary background account of the compressed and complex world in which these 'adolescents' find the resources for 'borrowing, mixing and fusion' (Johnson, in CCCS Education Group II, 1991: p.71) and, however constrained, appropriate them in the process of trying out the sense of themselves - thus, often, both 'mixing' and 'demarcating' in the same moment of self-positioning. Some reflections on the earlier history of this tendency are sketched by Andrew Ross:

> Just as the music industry cannot fully anticipate how its products will be received, so too, a fixed socio-economic analysis cannot fully account for the popular taste of consumer groups, many of whom 'misbehave' in the choice of their musical tastes, a delinquent practice that surfaced most visibly with the appearance, in the mid-fifties, of a 'youth culture' whose generational identity was organized around its willingness to cut across class-coded and color-coded musical tastes. (Ross, 1989: p.77)

The communicational possibilities and pressures of 'postmodernity' are not, then, peculiar to only the past decade or so but are features of a longer history of cultural change within which 'youth' has been a crucial site of combination and consequent 'remaking' (see Kress, 1995).

For the students discussed in this appendix, their choices were not in any way final or definite. But neither were they just 'free-floating' or arbitrary: they each have their own histories within particular families, within a particular locality and a particular school. Their musical preferences, and especially their relationship to pop, cannot be explained *simply* as the effects of the music industry's power to manipulate taste. Where they are located, and the sense they make of their locations, informs their relationship to the field of music and makes the vision of *mass* culture, a market driven homogeneity, somewhat implausible. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that the particular cultural resources available to young people are always also *of some specific kind* and are clearly formed, in part, in contexts of production to which they do not have access. The importance of the 'institutional' domain of cultural production should not be underestimated (see Goodwin, 1993). Indeed, there is a case for teaching young people about precisely those domains

of which, from their restricted vantage points, they can have only slight knowledge.

Appendix 2

Time-use diary - questions:

1. Where are you?
2. When in the day or night are you listening?
3. Who are you with, or who else is around?
4. what are you doing?
5. What are you listening to?
6. What kind of mood are you in?
7. Do you like what you are listening to?
8. have you spent any money on music in this week?

It might be useful to draw a diagram of the house or flat where you live - showing where music/TV are located.

Alan's 'time-use' diary

Day 1
1. Bedroom
2. NIGHT 11.15pm
3. Myself
4. LAZING ABOUT
5. U2 ACHTUNG BABE
6. TI(R)ED
7. Yes its relaxing
8 Yes £3.49
9.

Day 2
1. Bedroom
2. 7.00 pm
3. Myself
4. GETTING Ready to go out
5. Tears for fears
6. Good mood
7. Yes
8. Yes
(Above)

Day 3
1. Bedroom
2. MORNING
3. Myself
4. Ready for school.
5. Radio 1 fm
6. fed up
7. No its boring
8. (Above)

Day 4
1. Bedroom
2. 7.45 pm
3. Me + My GIRLFRIEND
4. TALKING
5. MIXTURE OF EVERYTHING
6. LIVELY
7. ITS NOT BAD
8. (Above)

Day 5
1. Sitting Room
2. 8.00
3. Me MUm & BROS
4. Sittingdown
5. Capital Gold
6. Waiting to go out to school.
7. Avrage
8. (Above)

Day 6
1. Girlfriends house
2. 10.00 am
3. Me Janice
4. Mucking about
5. Lionel Ritchie
6. Annoying Mood
7. Good
8. (Above)

Day 7
1. car
2. 10.10 am
3. Me and brother in law
4. Going to play f.ball
5. Capital fm (95.8 fm)
6. fit
7. could be better

Stephen's 'time-use' diary

To day is the 18 of September and I have heard a few things today the first thing I heard today was moondance a jazz tune sing by van morrison I heard another version by baby mcfeling. I hard this at school. The next thing I hard was song's from the Rolling Stones, Roy Orbison and Sonny and Cher I also hard Jhonthan king and many other son's from around the 60's and I hard this in my room from on my T.V. on a program called Sounds from the Sixtes. I also hard jam by Michael Jakson and heavy D and also from boy's to man singing end of the road and a verson maving gay Miss Jones by friddy Jackson I hard all of these song's from my cousin how bhought the recorde.

This is what I think of the song's I hard. I only liked one of verson of moon dance and that was the one by van morrison I hard in my music lesson and did not feel to good about being in school this was around 12.10 am. Whan I whac the porgram sound's from the Sixtes I thought that some of the song's were good and some was not.

I liked a few of my cousin's recordes the one that I did not like was from boy's to man.

Satuarday the 19th

I hard quit alot of music today mostly pop this was some of the music I hard from I.T.V Chart Show, I hard East 17, The Shamen, Boy George, Bryan May (from Queen), BELINDA Carlisel, Soul II Soul and Manic Stereet Preachers

these are the song thay ware singing

Name of group	what the sing
East 17	everybody in the houes of love
The Shaman	Ebeneezer good
Boy George	The Crying Game
Too much love will kill you	Too much love will kill you
BELINDA Carlisle	Heaven is place on earth

Soul II Soul	Just right
Manic Street Preachers	Suicide is Painless (which is the tuen from MASH

The time I hard these song's around 12.00 to 1.00. later on to day I hard some recrods.

Tuesday 29.9.92

I hard some rcorods Today not many
I hard public ENEMY album and a singl called people everyday which was sing by Arrested Development these was bhto rap I than hard promised LAND from The Style Council I also hard a sound tape.

Asiye's 'time-use' diary

Date Sat 19

When I listen to music I am usually in my room or doing the housework around the house.

I tend to listen to music early in the morning just after I get out of the bed and when I'm getting ready. Yesterday I woke up quite late and still turned on the radio. I think I enjoy listening to music in the morning because it gives me something to keep my mind occupied with and it also helps me stay awake. In the mornings I like listening to the radio, in the evening I like listening to cassettes both Turkish and English tapes.

Nearly always when I listen to the radio I am by myself. When I listen to cassettes I prefere it when it is in the sitting room and that time I'm usually with the rest of my family.

When I listen to music I am either doing my homework or doing housework. I am listening either to the radio or tapes.

To be listening to music I always have to be in a good mood either that or I don't listen to anything.

I nearly always enjoy the music I am listening to, I think this is because when I put on cassettes I put on ones that I have heard before so I know what it is like. The radio however dosn't bother me if it has horrible music or nice music. But usually they nearly always play music which are in the charts which I like.

When I buy any music tapes they are usually bought all together, I don't like going out to buy one cassette or CD and instead wait until I have enough money to buy at least two.

We have two T.Vs in the house and 3 record players we also have 3 walkmans and a radio player which belongs to me. There is one t.v in the living room and one in my sister room, record player in the sitting room, sisters room and in my room, and we each have a walkman apart from my parents and brothers.

Sun 20

didn't listen to hardly any music because I didn't have much homework and went out to a friends house.

Mon 21st

listend in the morning to the radio before school in my room.

I am usually by myself and sometimes with my sister. I am usually listening in the mornings when I am getting ready for school.

I am nearly always in a moody mood (unhappy) in the morning from having to wake up. I enjoy what I am listening to.

Tues 22nd

listend in the morning and a while after school.

I was in my bedroom

I was by myself and was getting ready for school I listend to the radio.

Wed 23

didn't listen to the radio in the morning because I didn't have any time, I listend to a tape (love song) in the evening before I went to bed, I was checking to see if I had any homework due the following day.

Sometimes I like to leave the music playing because it helps me to get to sleep which I often do before I go to bed. I enjoy what I am listening to because I put on tapes according to what kind of mood I'm in eg sleepy mood = easy listening, happy mood = fast music

Thursday

listened in the morning to the radio 95.8 FM my favourate station which I always listened to.

Evening did my homework without the music because I needed concenstration. Watched Top of the pops

Friday

listened in the morning before I went to school. Wings of love tape in the evening while I was reading my book.

Sat

Woke up late, didnt need to get ready so I didn't listen to the radio.

Listened to my walman in the afternoon while I was woking, still listened tothe radio. Tape before I went to bed. Also watch the Chart Show.

Sun.

didn't listen to anything in the morning, or even the evening

Mon

listend to the radio as usual before school, listened to my walkman while I was washing the dishes.

Tue

Morning. I listend to the radio, didn't listen to anything after school but did before I went to bed.

Wed

listned in the morning to the radio,

Thurs

listened in the morning to the radio, listened to walkman after school while doing the dishes, I was in the kitchen by myself.

Dont mind very much what sort of music it is unless it is music and keeps me occupied.

Questions for group discussion - on completion of the Music and Audience unit:

1. Does doing a unit like this help you to find out more about music or does it just make you realize what you already know?

2. Do you find quite big differences between what you know and listen to and what other people of your age seem to know about?

3. What are the problems in explaining your music to teachers?
What do you think they know about? What do your parents listen to?

4. Take 'hardcore' as an example: it's an adjective - hardcore rave - and a noun - just hardcore - so what is hardcore? Can you describe it?

5. How important to you is it to buy records and CDs? How important is dancing to you? Does the choice of image here suggest something about the way the music matters to you?

6. What did you enjoy most in doing this unit of work?

7. What do you feel you learnt in the process?

8. Was it useful to do the questionnaire first?

9. Are you satisfied with what you produced in the end?

10. How would you want to do it differently?

Appendix 3

Boffs

In this school (in Edmonton), the students are selected at the age of eleven on the basis of entrance examinations. From more than 1600 applicants, perhaps 180 are accepted. The criteria for admission are those of demonstrable academic 'ability'. An influential additional criterion favours those with a high level of achievement in 'classical' musical performance. The school draws its students from a wide area of north London and beyond. My perception, and that of others acquainted with the school from outside, is that it has a predominantly middle-class intake and that, once there, the competition and pressure to achieve are intense. It is not uncommon for students who do very well at school to be known by their fellow students as 'boffins' or 'boffs' and, in some contexts, such a term can have a variety of possibly disparaging connotations.[1] It might, for example, imply that those called 'boffs' set themselves apart and do not participate in the more ordinary life of their peers. It could suggest that, as a consequence, they lack credibility in terms of popular cultural knowledge, dress style and sexuality.

In the following exchange,[2] Christina comments on the way that her knowledge of popular music has been represented, in my account, as a kind of tactical denial of 'boffin' status:

[Extract 1]

> **Christina:** He writes something about normalization and I dunno yeah he thinks like you just wanna conform...
> ..I dunno he just writes all this stuff about normal people as if I'm abnormal or something...
> **PF:**. Oh it's the idea that erm in society as a whole, obviously you're exceptional in terms of your educational attainment level and so forth and that people come to -----, perhaps this is part of the subtext of what Spencer said, are expected to be a certain kind of person, other people's views of the school may be very different from people who're within it...like in the local paper it's as if they're all boffs or something you know I mean that is...oh ----- and yet you're in here and you

[1] See Blackman, 1995.

[2] Transcribed extracts from a discussion on 21st December 1995.

think well there's a few people you think really are boffs
Spencer: No there's more than a few I think
Christina?: muffled laugh
Spencer: I do yeah
Paul: If you tell them where you go to school they're like straight away yeah putting you.....

PF: Yeah I mean you know you could get three As at A level but you don't fit the stereotype of the boff and that's to do, partly deliberate on your part, you don't want to be seen like that...people're...in a sense by choosing Media Studies, you're kind of defining yourselves as not wanting to be seen like that...you know if you do double Maths, Physics and Chemistry or something
Christina (?): muffled laugh
PF: ...then you know you've actually got to kick quite hard to get out of that whereas in Media Studies in a sense straight away people say Oh Media Studies... you know...not a serious...
Spencer: You do get laughed at yeah...
PF:...so in a way you've prepared yourself for that, if you really wanted to just be seen as the hard-working serious student and nothing else then you're safer with much more conventional subjects and I suppose this is what he's arguing...so by normalizing he means that...
Spencer: But does musical taste go with your academic ability
Christina: I don't think so...I like loads of stuff that other people like...

The proposal made by Pete Fraser here is that by choosing to take Media Studies at A Level they have already positioned themselves in terms which may be construed by others as implying a refusal of a more traditional academic identity. The possibility is that their choices acquire the status of 'self-identifications', meaningful certainly in relation to the school's internal culture, but also likely to be understood by outsiders as implying a particular current and future orientation. Spencer comments 'you do get laughed at yeah'. The source of such mockery is left implicit but, in a subsequent discussion, it became apparent that adverse views of Media Studies came from relatives and from both some teachers and some students at the school.[3]

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[3] All of the students involved in the earlier research, and present for the discussion around which this appendix is centred, were taking Advanced level Media Studies; the 'self-identifications' of non-Media Studies students, and their

My own continuing concern, here addressed by the students only obliquely, is that of to what extent, by choosing Media Studies, they define themselves as 'belonging to' a culture of 'youth' from which other subjects clearly mark their distance. My analysis of Christina's earlier writing certainly included the implication that she implicitly countered the attribution of an insufficiently sexual, because excessively intellectual, identity by displaying knowledge and experience thought to be unavailable to boffs. In the context of this selective school, the suggestion I have made is that within Media Studies girls positioned as middle-class and educationally successful claim identities from which others might suppose they have removed themselves. Equally, it may be the case that girls whose self-identification is more working-class, also see Media Studies as a context in which to assert versions of themselves which could not be registered elsewhere in the curriculum (see Hey, 1997).

Respect

Angela's comments, in the following extract, bring into the discussion a self-consciously asserted class identification which, in this context, is used to contest the implications she attributes to my analysis:

[Extract 2]

> **PF:** ...I mean just to come back to you Angela you said something at the beginning before you'd had chance to read it... about talking about what kind of school this was, and you said well 'I'm from Edmonton' 'cause Spencer and Paul...
> [brief section omitted]
> **Angela:** ...well, erm, 'cause what he's implying in here is that because we had to take an exam to get in, that we're all from middle, that we've all had good upbringing as in good schools, went to good schools in good areas, and so that's why we were able to get in because you know we were taught that it's good to be clever and not just to be hard but the school that I went to you had to be quite, it's quite rough, there's like fights every day and there still is and it's getting worse now, my primary school that I went to and that hasn't

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view of Media Studies and its students, remains to be investigated.

affected me getting into ----...so, but, but I don't think that I'm middle-class, I don't feel, I've got middle-class education, secondary education, but I don't think that I'm middle class and he seems to think that because I'm in this school I'm gonna act like every other middle class girl there is and that we're all the same, when we're not...
PF: I don't think he does assume that but I means that's...
Angela: It seems like it in the writing...
PF:...the important thing about that is that it is of significance to you...like you battled your own way through, that's the same as you
Spencer: ...through the gutter...
Angela:...dragged my way up through the gutter
PF:.....just 'cause you went to ---- everything hasn't been easy

In the earlier analysis, to which Angela refers, she is located in terms of a general category to which, in fact, she claims she does not belong: 'middle-class girls'. To some extent she is offering a denial which is far from peculiar to the issue of class: the power of adults to categorize young people is more widely contested and may not always include a class dimension. Here, an unwillingness to be categorized may be more a matter of young people, positioned in 'adolescence', asserting their own hold on the terms of their own identities and refusing the power of a particular academic discourse to fix them, and to do so in terms they may not use themselves.

This issue can be considered from a number of perspectives. One is offered by Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995). They report on a series of interviews with young people, picked out in public contexts because their dress appears to imply sub-cultural affiliation:

> They are, first, resisting a way of being *seen*. Doing 'being ordinary', or at least, through their actions portraying themselves as not belonging to a specific category or group, is a method by which respondents can counter what must be a routine feature of their everyday lives: that by virtue of an inspection of their dress and appearance, other people assume that it is possible to see what kind of person they are. (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995: pp.103-104)

The strategy displayed in Angela's response to my account is, in part, of the kind that they describe - she does resist the attribution of a class belonging in terms comparable to those displayed by Widdicombe and Wooffitt's 'sub-cultural' respondents. However, her resistance is not as 'contingent' or 'variable' and her identity as 'utterly fluid' as Widdicombe and Wooffitt tend to suggest. In their study, despite occasional references to 'structure' (p.220), there is a depleted concept of 'context' in play. 'Context', for them, seems bounded by the immediate moments of exchange between social actors - they have little to say about the broader social and institutional settings of these exchanges, about themselves as social actors, or about the social and educational biographies of their respondents. This meagre use of 'context' seems largely a consequence of gathering data for one, more narrowly conceived purpose (p.1), and of subsequently attempting to build a broader account of 'youth subcultures' upon it. So, in their account, they have no data which might enable them to say anything at all about how respondents *have been* positioned socially, and educationally, and what discursive repertoires might thus have been available to them. This is a significant flaw and somewhat undermines their larger theoretical conclusions with respect to social identity. To grasp the relationship between 'structure' and 'agency' requires a more concrete specification of how the biographies of individuals intersect with, and are formed through, the cultural, discursive and material resources which particular historical circumstances have produced.[4]

Widdicombe and Wooffitt offer a way of describing the resistance to categorization which Angela demonstrates in her comments to her teacher. At the very least, their approach is helpful to the extent that it shows how control over the terms of 'self-identity' might be negotiated in conversational exchange. But why should Angela object to being described as 'middle-class'? If I had written that, unlike many others, her family would lead me to define her as working-class - what would her response have been? Is it 'category-ascription' as such that bothers her or is it, more precisely, that she wants to argue that I have made a mistake?

A further perspective on Angela's 'resistant' self-identification might involve placing much more emphasis, as I suggested above, on her age and her position at the end of 'adolescence'. As, culturally and historically, 'adolescence'

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[4] The terms, and the general tendency, of the argument here are familiar enough - see C. Wright Mills 1959, especially Chapter 8.

has been constructed as the phase of life in which questions of identity are posed and, eventually, resolved, it would be reasonable to suppose that Angela, in her last year of school at the age of 17 or 18, would be expected, and would expect herself, to know 'who' she is. Or, to put it another way, she is positioned as able to speak of, and to explain, her own past and her possible future. On the basis of age and her location in the most senior year of high school, she can claim the right to define herself.

In a brief essay on the rights of teenagers, Richard Lindley (1989) offers this account of 'adolescence':

> By the time a child is thirteen, he or she is very likely to have sufficient stability and conceptual competence to be able to have the objectives of a plan of life. An important reason for the intense emotionality during adolescence is the desire to assert one's own independence, to live - for the first time - according to one's own plan of life. Although a person's conceptions of what constitutes a good life are likely to change more during adolescence than later in life, the changes are not so rapid or whimsical as to invalidate the claim that teenagers do have a plan of life. After all, adolescence is a time of great seriousness, and life-affecting decisions need not be taken for frivolous reasons. And let us not forget that for adults the criteria of *competence* for making one's own life-affecting decisions are weaker than those for making choices which would, on reflection, be the *best*. (Lindley, 1989: p.92)

This raises some important issues, even if, in common with many others, Lindley writes of 'adolescence' as an almost universal fact of individual development. In our culture, broadly speaking, there is certainly the expectation that 'adolescence' will include the formation of a 'plan of life' of some kind. Such a groping towards autonomy has to be acknowledged as including a necessary challenge to accounts constructed by others. In my research with 'adolescent' students of Media Studies, it is clearly problematic, *in general*, to write and publish adult accounts of others positioned as 'adolescent'. To construct public definitions of others at a point when they are intensely concerned with taking control of their own self-identities is an especially sensitive matter. In this case, these particular students have been given more than the usual space to contest and negotiate the terms in which they have been represented. So, again in part, Angela's response can be seen as a particular

instance of the wider tensions of relationships between adults and adolescents.

In fact, most of the students involved in this discussion seem to acknowledge that they are caught in a significantly ambivalent set of relations: they can say that they like being 'researched' but are also uncomfortable with a discourse which appears to quite radically depersonalize their own accounts of their lives. The enjoyment of flattery, and the fantasy of becoming 'famous', are briefly illustrated in the following extract from late in the session:

[Extract 6]

Angela: So, research subjects...being a research subject
Spencer: I'm quite pleased to be a guinea-pig
Angela: I feel quite flattered...
.....
Spencer: Are we going to be famous for this...?

[Brief section omitted]

PF: So, so you said you were flattered to be researched...
Christina: yeah...it is quite flattering...
Angela: It just goes to show that what we say, someone, someone, thinks it's quite interesting and that it's not just gonna get thrown away like everything else, everything else that we wrote, all the other essays that we do just get thrown away...

It may be that what they like about being respondents for research is the sense of being chosen and of their words being confirmed as of value. In the next extract, earlier in the discussion, the girls are keen to claim that they have a sense of themselves as special people. This is certainly an outcome of their positioning within a selective school, but it is also of some importance in defining their relation to the continuing experience of an intense and demanding schooling and their projected self-identities - their 'life-plans':

[Extract 3]

Christina: ...I think this school sort of might distort our image anyway of what, if we're

different or not, cause everyone here is like sort of the similar intellect level so when, you only really know or see the difference when you maybe meet people from other schools, 'cause I know that's what happened to me 'cause I didn't really mix with people outside this school for a few years when I first got here and when I did it was quite, they were different, however much you've don't want to

Angela: yeah they've all got different attitudes

Angela/Christina:...they've got different attitudes...

Christina: I mean I think when you were saying about our views being heard or whatever I think it's 'cause most of us are quite erm, we like *know* that, or believe in our selves, that our, what we say means something...we've got more sort of self-respect maybe as it were, or self-belief than maybe other people who just don't sort of care, a lot of them just sort of don't care, if you ask them a question they just go 'I don't care'...

In this respect to be chosen appears to confirm their self-identification as successful. To be chosen for the detailed attention that my research entailed **repeats** their own prior educational experience of being chosen to attend a selective school and, perhaps, of being chosen even to apply for admission. To be positioned as research subjects is thus taken, to some extent, to confirm their self-identification as 'different' and as convinced that 'what we say means something'. But to be categorized by the research appears, in several cases, to conflict with a discourse in which their success is understood as proof of the individual possession of ability. This requires some extended elaboration and it is at this point that I want to introduce a third perspective.

There is another way of explaining Angela's response and her subsequent self-account which endorses her explanation of her own class position without reducing it to no more than a contingent tactical evasion of my power to categorize her. This third perspective derives from the work of Sennett and Cobb (1972). They explore what they call 'Badges of Ability' in the context of class relations - specifically in urban settings in New England. An aspect of their argument can provide a useful frame for what I want to say about Angela and, to some extent, others involved in the group discussion. They trace the idea of ability to the Enlightenment:

> Ironically, the impulse to determine a person's ability is also the child of the Enlightenment. In eighteenth-century France and England, bright sons

> of lower-bourgeois families demanded that government and professional positions be opened to persons on the basis of natural ability, rather than of parental influence or hereditary right. (Sennett and Cobb, 1972: p.61)

Moving on to the history of intelligence testing in this century, they suggest:

> The early I.Q. testers believed in a bell-shaped curve of ability, with fewer and fewer people having more and more ability. Let us not worry about the scientific shakiness of this idea. The image is important because on the most intimately personal level it appears to people as a way to decide who can wear the badge. In these struggles for worth there are two classes, the many and the few; the selves of the many are in limbo, the selves of the few who have performed win respect. (Sennett and Cobb, 1972: p.67)

Angela's contributions to the following discussion, echoed by Christina, develop an insistent demand for *respect* and imply that by locating them as already middle-class - because of their family background - I have denied them the respect to which they are entitled. For Angela the issue is most sharply defined: she has not been recognized as a working-class girl and the *measure* of her success must therefore have been judged inadequately. For Christina there is no claim to self-identification as working-class but, similarly, there is an implicit denial that she was provided with particularly favoured cultural resources prior to secondary school. The basis of their demand for respect lies in their educational success which, set against their accounts of their previous schooling, is offered as unarguable evidence of their ability. In this discourse, ability is an individual, an inalienable, quality of the self. The offence caused by my class categorization lies in its implicit denial that ability is an inalienable quality - my 'mistake' is, in quite a literal sense, alienating.

Angela's responses to an earlier questionnaire (see below) provide further detail of her self-identification, first in a note on her parents' occupations and secondly in a brief description of her earlier schooling:

> Mother - care assistant in a residential home (night shift) is currently doing a work placement

for social services as part of her degree course at university.
Father - mechanic (car engineer)

W--- Primary School (From nursery to Year 6)
Full of working class children of parents who don't care
Overcrowded, teachers underpaid and underqualified - can't cope with the delinquency.
---- Secondary School - Well established, attempting to not discriminate - all out for exam results, perhaps helping some kids along the way

By contrast, Christina records her father as a chartered accountant and her mother as a housewife. She describes her primary school as 'quite a quiet, spacious school with large grounds - a state school'. In the following extracts from the group discussion there is some blurring of distinctions between them and, in effect, a convergence in their self-identification as 'clever'.

[Extract 4]

Christina: Well say my school wasn't great, I think it had like two people got in from my school to ----, the year that I tried and erm even there like everyone you know sort of lived in council flats and everything around it and even there I was sort of set apart, not 'cause I was different where I lived, just simply because I was cleverer than all of them so even from then I think you're still sort of classed as different, I was never like the same as everyone else...
Angela:...but then when we're put into this category, into the middle class category, into the middle-class category, we just want a bit more respect, because it's like we got here because of us, because of our ability not because our parents put us in good schools and because we mixed with people from private schools...

So, for Angela and to some extent for Christina, the irony of the situation is that they find the research both a threat to, and a rewarding confirmation of, their ability. To conclude this section, I want to recall Angela's words above:

It just goes to show that what we say, someone, someone, thinks it's quite interesting and that it's not just gonna get thrown away like everything

else, everything else that we wrote, all the other essays that we do just get thrown away...

Set up for life...

In the last lengthy extract below there is a more general discussion of how their schooling 'sets them up for life'. In the opening statement, Angela locates herself as belonging to a category which, as the discussion develops, appears to be composed of ---- students in general and, more particularly, the students present for the discussion. Consistent with her earlier insistence upon 'respect', here she projects her self-identity in the future as beyond the 'menial', and beyond it because of educational success and the economically secure 'life-style' to which she assumes it will give access. 'To make something of ourselves', though Angela's phrase, seems the shared aspiration of the group. For them, to devote their 'youth' to demanding academic work and thus to be responsive to, and regulated, by the school's competitive regime is an acceptable exchange in their understanding of 'the longer term'. The relationship between what they must be now and what they can become in the future is one which appears to connect 'youth' and 'adulthood' in a shared, cohesive, and stable 'life-plan'. Of course, as I have said, these are students more than a year beyond the end of compulsory schooling at 16 but, for all of them, the 'plan' seems to have been settled long before they reached that moment of decision. What also emerges here, and is continued in a phase of the discussion too lengthy to include, is how strongly these students identify the school itself as the formative context for their academic success. Moreover, they locate themselves as belonging to a particular fraction of north London 'youth' defined, exclusively, by membership of the school; broader social and cultural affiliations are, where acknowledged, regarded as subordinate to the school's institutional power. In all of this, the emphasis on 'respect', though not reiterated so explicitly, is underpinned by the implication that their ability is confirmed by their survival-as-students in an institution which enforces a loyalty to its competitive self-definition.

[Extract 5]

Angela: Yeah it's from the school but I just, I think it's also, it just happens that we're all, we've sort of got the same attitude, we sort of, we, most of us want to go on to university, most of us want to make something of ourselves, that we

won't, we don't just wanna sort of settle for some menial job and just earning enough to live, we, we wanna earn enough so that we can be happy...in the end
Paul:...yeah but money isn't everything just because you...
Angela: I know, I know I'm not saying that, I'm just saying that we think more about it than someone, than y'know someone else would, from another school, from...
Christina: I mean 'cause you can't I don't know how you can say that...
Angela:...just like er a success, a success
Christina: I don't know if you can say that your background makes you middle-class or not 'cause like my sister doesn't go to a, to ----, but she's from obviously the same family but I think even she classes herself as different from me, she always comes, I mean in my house she comes to me with like her homework as opposed to like my mum or my dad, so I dunno, it's just like, I [**Angela:** ...the family intellect...] don't see how she(?) can class it, I don't see how you can class it as your family being sort of erm making your class up...

[Brief section omitted]

Christina: ...my sister's like I mean, I really think that the fact that she has gone to, she goes to S----, the fact that she has sort of gone there, has, I mean she's got a real sort of *attitude* [sigh/suppressed laugh] it's like very different to mine
Spencer:...S----'s not one of the worst schools around..
Christina: Yeah it's not, I'm not saying that but it is a lot a lot lower than ours, it's the second highest school but it's still quite a lot, significant difference from ours
David:...there's other things, like motivational things as well, that this school gives you...
Christina:...yeah I mean this school sort of enforces it...
David: I mean it's not just my parents going oh if you don't do well they'll chuck you out, erm if I hadn't got in I don't think I'd've done as well, I think that things like having to get that what is it five GCSEs...generally isn't a problem
Christina: Yeah I think they set you high...I think they set you high standards because I remember when I got my GCSE marks, I was talking to some friends from S---- and I was saying 'oh I'm really annoyed

I only got...' I don't know what it was four As, a C and five Bs whatever it was I can't remember and they were like 'my god that's like amazing, you've got like ten GCSEs' and I was like 'yeah but anyway it's really not that good in our school, I mean it's like average or whatever in our school' and yet they were like really happy to get sort of two passes or something.....three passes or four passes
PF:...that's interesting...they set you more, do you actually feel, I know we're getting away from the research but I think this is worth asking anyway - Do you actually feel there is a pressure, that is, that is conscious...
Christina: Yeah but I think it's a good, I think it's a good pressure because they set...
Angela:..because we can, we can do it, I think they should have
Christina: I think, I think they've put us, they've put like a...
David:...you're forced to do well...
PF:.....one of the first things I said to you when I was your year tutor in assembly was you're not a failure...you haven't got nine A*...
Christina: yeah but I think it's good that they've like instilled [**PF:** So where does that attitude come from?] a, aim, ambition because it's like I think it's also to do with the surroundings all the other people.....it's like a lot of competitiveness
David: You're here for five hours a day for all your teenage years...it's ground into you isn't it...
Spencer: ...no one wants to be bottom of the class...
Christina: yeah it's a lot of competitiveness...
PF:.....is it all a sort of unconscious peer pressure or is it...
Christina:...I think it's the whole institution...[**Caleb:** It's not the teachers...] no it's not the teachers...it's the whole, I think it's more like L---- the school, than the teachers...
David:...yeah it's like unspoken rule you've got to keep up the good name all that crap...you've got to be good not just for yourself but for the school...
Angela:...and there's always talk about 'oh they're gonna get chucked out because they won't be able to get the grades, or y'know they won't be able to finish their GCSEs because they won't be able to get the grades or they'll chuck 'em out so they won't bring down their league table....
.....[multiple exchange omitted]

Christina: I think it's quite good though because if people didn't put pressure on me I know personally I probably wouldn't be so sort of ambitious or like want to do so well if I had like...I mean I work best under pressure anyway so like just personally I mean if somebody wasn't hounding me for an essay I would just never do it but like...no but I work better under pressure
Angela:...it's putting us under more pressure than we would be if we were in another school...
Christina:...but I think that's really good I think that sets us up for life, for a lot of things, I mean y'know when you've got a job they're not just gonna let you let you do whatever you want are they so I think it's sort of quite ...it's just good for us really...

In all of this, and in the discussion which followed, there is an explanation of their educational routes which is broadly shared across gender. Nevertheless, the girls, to whose words I have devoted most attention in this appendix, represent themselves, and the 'individuality' of their achievements, with more vehemence than many of the boys. The contrast is not entirely consistent, or clear, but - in the context of the discussion - they are a little more insistent in claiming the futures they believe themselves to deserve. Many, though not all, of the boys are more inclined to offer ironical, perhaps evasive, formulations of themselves as adults.

Futures: 'projective narratives'

The extent to which Media Studies has some particular place in these students' formulations of their own futures does not emerge with much clarity from the discussion itself - though in responses to a brief questionnaire (see below) and in a later discussion (March 4th 1996) with myself, their futures as successful students seem, by this stage in their schooling, to be almost literally unremarkable.

These are just a few selected responses to the questionnaire:

Angela -

What do you expect to do when you leave?

University degree - hopeful combination of media and economics. Get a well paid, high powered job and travel the world, spending money on the way.

What kind of work do you imagine yourself doing in the future?

Something important - computers in there somewhere. Media related that will enable me to travel, meet lots of people and keep up with fashion.

Christina -

What do you expect to do when you leave?

Go to university + do a media course. Then hopefully take a year out to explore life.

What kind of work do you imagine yourself doing in the future?

Ideally a media related job - marketing, communications or something along these lines.

David -

What do you expect to do when you leave?

Go to the shop + buy a coke! Ho Ho Media Studies at a University

What kind of work do you imagine yourself doing in the future?

I hate to think!

Spencer -

What do you expect to do when you leave?

Go to university

What kind of work do you imagine yourself doing in the future?

No idea.

Paul -

What do you expect to do when you leave?

University

What kind of work do you imagine yourself doing in the future?

[No response]

Of course questionnaires don't offer much depth and these students responded, as did quite a high proportion of the group, with unusual brevity. On this basis, as in the discussion examined above, it would be tempting to argue that the girls have more strongly formulated 'life-plans' than the boys though, reading across the responses of the larger group, such a conclusion could not be sustained on the available evidence. The lack of definition in their responses generally is not surprising and, if anything, the obviousness of the possible answers - 'Go to university' and 'Not sure but..' - perhaps made any effort to produce a more definite and more detailed response seem unnecessary.

Indeed, these students were already quite experienced in rehearsing the terms of a particular 'public debate' about the status of Media Studies as a school subject. What still remains extremely difficult to determine is the extent to which their experience of Media Studies has in any way become a basis for a more wide-ranging politics of identity. Indeed, in my own discussion (March 4th 1996) with the larger group this was the most intractably unspoken dimension *in that context*. On the whole, the discussion seemed governed by an understanding of Media Studies as, on the one hand, an academic discipline involving the critical analysis of media texts and, on the other, a more technically orientated and practical discipline involving training in production skills. The wider cultural and subjective implications of Media Studies work for these students remain to be specified - though through the dialogue initiated by my earlier analysis of their relationship to popular music some evidence did emerge. In fact several of the boys, initially quite hostile to my account did, in the context of Pete Fraser's mediation of its arguments, begin to take up the terms of the analysis and work with them.

To conclude, I want to emphasise that, on the whole, they seem reconciled to the demands of the school to the extent that they are an acceptable means to achieve a cultural disposition, and to acquire a cultural capital, of (market) value in their adult futures. It is the school itself - the cultivation of a self-identification as 'special', the shared experience of highly regulated time through their 'teenage years' - which emerges as an especially powerful resource

for their 'identities'. When I last saw the group, in March 1996, my main impression was that their identity-as-students was an almost intimidating achievement: their impersonal manner, their ease with formality, and their facility in addressing an academic outsider almost distracted me from the 'content' of what they had to say.[5] Indeed, what they did say was only occasionally anchored by a personal anecdote, or by other reference to their particular experience, and thus had the character of 'serious opinion' in public debate. Though they did refer to the views of others in terms which involved using more informal language (e.g. 'they think this subject is a doss') - the attribution was clear and thus the terms - 'doss', 'boff' - were implicitly 'in quotes' in their own utterance. Thus, whatever the scope of their other possible modes of self-presentation, their fluency as participants in this form of seminar discussion is itself evidence of their achieved relation to the domain of formal education. Furthermore, the self-assurance with which they represented their choices - even when they spoke of perceiving, at the age of 14, Media Studies as 'easy' and 'fun' - suggested that, in the public context of such a group discussion at least, they could (re)construct coherent routes through secondary education and into university: their lives, in this formal domain, are thus represented in terms of an ordered progression towards adult identities, as people who will 'make something of themselves'. Again, much more mess and complexity might well be brought into another setting, but here they enacted themselves as the students the school expected them to be.

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[5] Franco Ferrarotti observes that: 'Knowledge does not have the "other" as its object; instead it should have as its object the inextricable and absolutely reciprocal interaction between the observer and the observed. It will thus become a mutually shared knowledge rooted in the intersubjectivity of the interaction, a knowledge all the more profound and objective as it becomes integrally and intimately subjective. The price to be paid by the observer for a thorough and, more pointedly, scientific knowledge of his object will be to be reciprocally known just as thoroughly by the latter. Knowledge thus becomes what sociological methodology has always wished to avoid: a risk.' [See 'On the autonomy of the biographical method', p.20, in Bertaux, 1981.]

The Questionnaire

A Media Biography

All of the following questions can be answered with as many lines of writing as you want to offer.

If any question asks for information you don't want to give, just don't answer it.

Name: *Age:* *Gender:*

1. When and where were you born?

2. Where did you live between the ages of: 0-5, 5-11, 11-16

3. Could you describe the kind of family in which you grew up?

4. What kinds of work do your parents do?

5. What kinds of schools have you attended through from infancy to the present? Could you write a few lines to describe each one?

6. Have you had music lessons - outside/within school, from what age, for which instruments, for what kinds of music?

7. Again, taking three roughly defined periods: 0-5, 5-11, 11-16 - Which media do you remember as most important in each phase?

Just give a few examples from the whole range of media: recorded music, radio, film, tv/video, newspapers, magazines, books and photography...

8. Did your parents control what you watched, listened to or read?

9. To what extent have brothers and sisters or friends been significant in shaping your involvement with various media?

10. In your household now, can you describe the range of media technologies available to you and the people you live with?

11. In which rooms are these various technologies located?

12. Do some people have more access than others?

13. Is there a lot of shared use?

14.Is your own use - and that of others - very individual and somewhat private? (Separate rooms, personal stereo?)

15. What stations, channels, programmes do you watch/listen to regularly?

16. How important to you are media and media related events which involve going out/theatrical presentation? (e.g. cinema, live music)

17. How do you find out about new music or films etc?

18. What proportion of your available cash do you spend on recorded music/cinema/video/live music/magazines? (Take these together and/or separately).

19. What subjects are you studying at school at the moment?

20. What do you expect to do when you leave?

21. What kind of work do you imagine yourself doing in the future?

22. Looking back over your responses to these questions - what do you think has shaped your current taste in recorded music and other media?

23. In thinking back over the past, to what extent do the media figure in your memory as an important part of your life?
24. Are there other questions you think it would be useful to ask?

CR/March 1995

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